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Ed Speak



FOR A CAR THAT offers LaFerrari levels of tech for less than a quarter of the price, the new Honda NSX (pictured above) faded into

the background at the recent Frankfurt motor show. Familiarity didn't help (I think this is the sixth time we've seen the car at a show), but neither did the surprise appearance of the Honda Project 2&4 concept.

The 2&4 (see page 11) doesn't just evoke the spirit of Soichiro Honda, it reincarnates him in mechanical form. Powered by a jewel-like MotoGP engine (a 999cc, 212bhp V4) and soaked in delicious engineering, it threw an invisibility cloak over the NSX – a car that couldn't be more diametrically opposed. The 2&4 was my Frankfurt 'Best in Show'.

The NSX has been delayed by six months. According to Honda, the delay has been caused by a change in engine format during the development phase. Originally designed with a transverse naturally aspirated V6, it will now have a longitudinal twin-turbo hybrid V6.

It's a solid reason, but it makes me nervous. The car should be well into its final durability testing by now, with engineering sign-off and dynamic setup complete. Six months more buys a considerable number of durability miles, the desire for which is understandable because Honda cannot undermine its reputation for reliability with a flaky supercar. But if those

'Alarm bells must really be ringing back in the US, where the car will be built'

months are being used to further calibrate and refine that immensely complex drivetrain (nine-speed DCT, torque vectoring, hybrid, four-wheel drive), alarm bells must really be ringing back in the US, where the car has been engineered and where it will be built.

The NSX also has, to my eyes at least, a rather uncomfortable aesthetic. It doesn't have the drama of a Huracán, the surfacing of an R8, the muscle of an AMG GT or the grace of a 911. The slash-cut wedges that dominate conspire to bounce your eye from one surface to another. And I know this is going to annoy some of our friends on the other side of the pond, but the design feels too Americanised, neither cleverly interpreting Japanese design signatures (like Mazda has successfully achieved in recent years) nor moving the look of the genre on.

But what I'm most concerned about is the way the NSX will drive. It could be a mini-918 Spyder, blending high-tech with excitement, feedback and pure driving thrills. Technology, appropriately deployed, is no longer an impediment to this. But it could also be a Mitsubishi GTO, and for a company that has just impaled the concept of the Thrill of Driving with the 2&4, that simply won't be good enough. ☒

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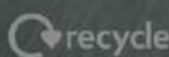
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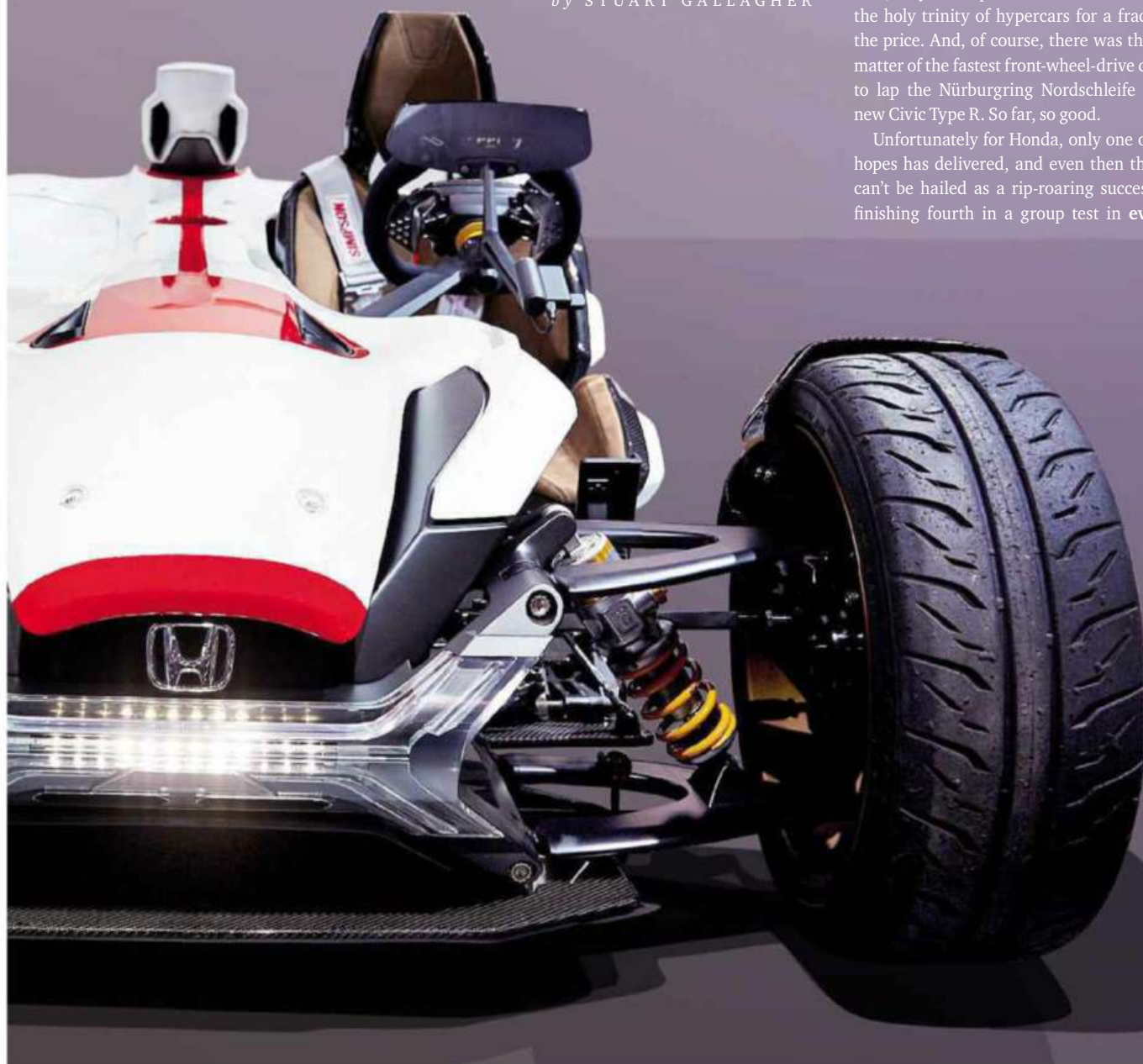
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308 RAmbition
RENAULTSPORTExplore
BAJATech
GEARBOXES

Honda Project 2&4

by STUART GALLAGHER

YOU CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL THAT 2015 has been a year of mixed emotions for Honda. It started with great hopes and expectations with a return to Formula 1 by teaming up with old flame McLaren, a pairing that needed little introduction inside or outside of the paddock. Then there was the anticipation building for the arrival of the new NSX, a hybrid supercar to offer all the tech of the holy trinity of hypercars for a fraction of the price. And, of course, there was the small matter of the fastest front-wheel-drive car ever to lap the Nürburgring Nordschleife – hello new Civic Type R. So far, so good.

Unfortunately for Honda, only one of these hopes has delivered, and even then the Civic can't be hailed as a rip-roaring success after finishing fourth in a group test in *evo* 212.



“Concept status has allowed the designers to run riot”

The NSX, meanwhile, is delayed. Again. It was due to be launched in summer 2015 but a decision was made to redesign the powertrain and essentially start over again. At this rate it will be due a facelift before it's been driven by anyone outside of the company. And as for the F1 return? Farcical. Embarrassing. Potentially career-ending for one British driver. Put simply, Honda has been found wanting and is on the verge of undoing generations of hard, brilliant, championship-winning work in one season.

But there is hope. At September's Frankfurt motor show, as the NSX spun forlornly on Honda's stand, next to it was a vision of what gets us so excited about the world's largest engine manufacturer and the potential it has when it puts its mind to innovative engineering. Few, if any, other car makers can match Honda in this regard, and where rivals spend resources on hoverboards, Honda delivers the 'Project 2&4'.

The concept, and sadly it is only a concept for the time being, is the result of Honda's Global Design Project, an

annual contest among the company's design studios to create a single vehicle that best represents Honda's philosophy. The 2&4 was created by Honda's motorcycle design team in Asaka, Japan, in collaboration with the company's automobile design studio in Wako, also in Japan.

To *evo*, the Project 2&4 embodies everything that we remember from Honda's past in terms of innovation and creativity, but it also reminds us what's been lacking from the company in recent years.

The Project 2&4 is a vehicle



IN DEPTH

1 CHASSIS

The chassis owes more to Honda's motorbike roots than to the company's cars. It is in essence an expanded aluminium motorbike frame with a carbonfibre floor suspended beneath it. This floor has been designed to optimise airflow.

2 BODYWORK

The colour scheme is a homage to Honda's 1965 F1 car, the RA272. The V12-engined slimline machine was the first Japanese car to win in F1: it led from start to finish at the Mexican GP. American Richie Ginther took the victory.

3 ENGINE

The 90-degree V4 is the same detuned MotoGP engine Honda fits to its RC213V-S road bike. The crank, main and counter shafts are arranged in a triangular formation, shortening the 999cc motor to the same size as an 800cc unit. Peak power is 212bhp at 13,000rpm.

4 SEAT

The single-piece carbon-seat appears to float on top of the chassis, but is in fact connected to the car's carbon floor. The design is intended to provide the thrills of riding a superbike but with the engagement of driving a sports car.

5 BRAKES & SUSPENSION

Honda has looked to its motorbike suppliers for the brakes, which use four-pot Brembo calipers, and adjustable dampers, which are from Öhlins. The wheels are entirely bespoke.



SHORTER

370
mm

WIDER

8
mm

LOWER

200
mm

than an Ariel Atom

COCKPIT



RIVAL

Ariel Atom



Does a Honda engine in an aluminium frame with minimal bodywork sound familiar? It should do. It's

a formula that Ariel has perfected with its Atom (albeit with a 2-litre car engine). Nearly 20 years

after Ariel was founded, Honda has realised it has all the ingredients to do the same.

There is no instrument binnacle in the Project 2&4. Instead, data is projected onto a clear screen mounted on the steering column.

that grabs you from every angle. It's shorter than an Ariel Atom by 370mm, but it's as low as a Caterham and not much wider. Its blend of aluminium and naked carbonfibre with minimalist bodywork draws you into every area of its design.

But it's the 2&4's mechanical elements that really fascinate. Positioned behind the single, one-piece carbon seat is a detuned RC213V V4, four-stroke motorbike engine. For those of you not familiar with Marc Márquez, it's the same engine that powers his race-winning MotoGP bike. Rather than sending power through the bike's six-speed sequential gearbox, there is a

double-clutch unit controlled by a pair of paddleshifters behind the tiny, removable, Alcantara-wrapped steering wheel.

A skeleton chassis means some of the best bits of the drivetrain are exposed, such as the titanium exhaust that snakes around the engine and exits high-up through the rear bodywork. Incidentally, the inspiration for the design and colour scheme of the bodywork comes from Honda's 1965 V12-engined RA272 Formula 1 car.

The beauty of concept status is that it has allowed Honda's project managers and designers to run riot with the details, our favourite being

how conventional instrument dials are eschewed for a head-up display comprising a translucent wind deflector onto which data is projected from behind.

There's also no need for obstructive and ungainly aero addenda because the carbon floor and chassis that the body appears to float upon has been designed to channel air as effectively as possible under and over the car. And then there are the adjustable Öhlins dampers and the Brembo brakes taken from the MotoGP bike, the bespoke magnesium wheels, the laser strip that acts as headlights, the 14,000rpm red line... Please, Honda, build this car. And quickly.

WILL THEY BUILD IT?

Currently Honda has no plans to build the Project 2&4, although it will of course carefully gauge response to the concept from the press and public alike.

The Project 2&4 is the shot in the arm Honda desperately needs to regain the lost credibility surrounding the NSX and Formula 1 projects. Of all the Japanese car manufacturers, Honda was always the one most led by innovation, but in recent years it has floundered and delivered a range of cars that have followed the crowd.

The 2&4 doesn't need to be a series-production car. It would work as a limited-run model, with no more than 100 units, to spur enthusiasm for the brand and get people talking about Honda in a positive light once again. Think along the lines of the Renault Sport Spider of the mid-'90s, but more extreme.

A single-seat, motorbike-engined, aluminium-framed, carbon-bodied machine from a company that builds cars such as the Jazz will be hard to justify to the product planners, but Honda needs Project 2&4 to show everyone it has still got a pulse.

Stuart Gallagher

POWER

212
bhp

Peak power of the 2&4's 999cc V4 engine

TORQUE

87
lb ft

A motorbike torque figure, but...

WEIGHT

405
kg

For a power-to-weight ratio of 532bhp per ton



13,000 RPM

Peak power arrives at double the revs of an SLS



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Hyundai takes on Bugatti

New performance sub-brand reveals hypercar concept to rival electrified Veyron replacement



HAVING SPENT A DECADE establishing a reputation for building dependable, reliable and affordable family cars, Hyundai (which is currently the fastest-growing carmaker) is now turning its attention to the performance sector with its recently launched 'N' sub-brand.

Spearheading the Frankfurt motor show launch of N was a new i20 WRC contender, the 'RM15' – a 1260kg carbon-bodied, mid-engined coupe with 296bhp – and the '2025 Vision Gran Turismo' (pictured).

The N 2025 is powered by the first mass-produced hydrogen fuel-cell system along with supercapacitors – total power output is 859bhp with energy regeneration available under braking. Built around a carbonfibre monocoque, weight has been kept below 1000kg. The car's aerodynamic qualities are dictated by a tube-type underfloor air-supply duct that connects the front grille to the rear of the car and minimises underbody air

pressure for maximum downforce. There is also an active air-brake that doubles as a drag-reduction system.

Like many concepts today, the N 2025 has been dreamt up for gamers. What it does do along with the RM15, however, is allow Hyundai to get the message out that it's serious about performance cars. The first creation of the N brand – named after Hyundai's two test centres (one in Namyang, South Korea, and another at the Nürburgring) – will be a turbocharged i30 hot hatch scheduled for 2017.

A 'Vision Gran Turismo' that is perhaps closer to production is Bugatti's concept of the same name. As with the Hyundai, it's been conceived for the screen, but it's no secret that Bugatti is working on a Veyron replacement currently known as 'Chiron'. What will it be? Faster and more extreme than the Veyron, for certain. Hybrid-powered? Yes. The new car's powertrain will feature an electric power source to accompany

the Veyron's 16-cylinder, eight-litre quad-turbo engine. An adapted version of the Porsche 918 Spyder's hybrid system could be used, but more likely is that Bugatti will go for the electric four-wheel-drive system on the Porsche Mission E concept.

While strictly a concept, Bugatti has also used the Vision Gran Turismo to experiment with aerodynamics and engine cooling. This has resulted in some very clever aero fixes such as the four-eye headlights positioned in the front wheel arches. They direct

cooling air towards the brakes and reduce wheelarch turbulence. There's also a new radiator cooling system, which is not something you spend resources on solely for the purposes of a computer game.

While Hyundai's official step into the performance market should be applauded and supported (so long as the products are good enough), it's Bugatti's Vision Gran Turismo that provides the clearer indication of how the next generation of hypercars will manifest.

FUEL CELL

661
bhp

*Generated by the
fuel cell stacks*

YEAR

2025

*The concept is 'set' a
decade into the future*

REVS

20,000
rpm*The speed of the
air-blower's turbine*

POWER-TO-WEIGHT

898
bhp/ton*Power-to-weight ratio
of Hyundai's concept*

POWER

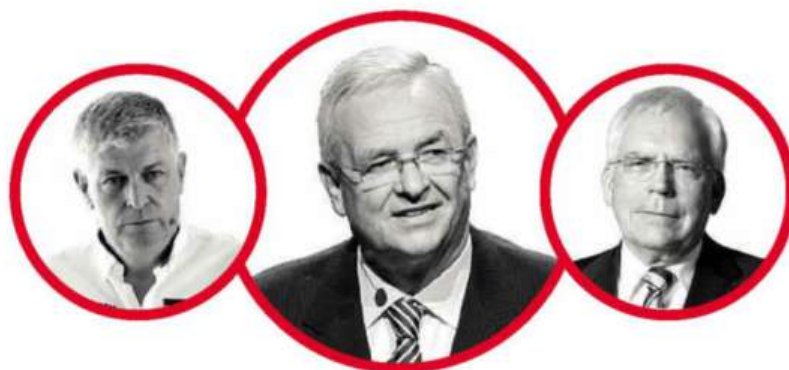
198
bhp*Developed from
regenerative brakes*

MOTORS

4

*An electric motor sits
within each wheel*

WEIGHT

972
kg*Very lightweight for
a fuel-cell vehicle*

Week of the long knives

YOU MAY BELIEVE THAT Volkswagen's admission that it found a way to cheat the US Environmental Protection Agency's emissions test for diesel engines is of little interest to **evo** readers. But while the crime concerns a technology we tolerate rather than celebrate, the fallout is of great interest, not least because of the people who have and potentially could be removed from their positions in the VW Group as a consequence of the scandal. The body count is set to be brutal.

The headline news is the

departure of Volkswagen CEO Martin Winterkorn (centre), his position becoming untenable as VW's market cap plummeted by 25bn euros in a day. Whether he knew what his engineers were up to or not, investors wanted to see decisive action. The Qatar Wealth Fund, the biggest VW preferred shareholder and third largest ordinary stockholder, stands to lose \$4.3bn in the crash.

Winterkorn will not be the only departure, but as **evo** closed for press, VW wouldn't confirm which of its senior engineers had been

suspended with immediate effect pending an internal investigation (visit evo.co.uk for updates). However, it is rumoured that Ulrich Hackenberg (right), Audi's chief engineer, and Wolfgang Hatz (left), who carries out the same role for Porsche, are at risk of losing their jobs. Both worked at VW during the time the diesel engine in question was in development.

It is believed the decision to cheat the emissions test was a strategic one taken at the highest level, with only board-level personnel aware of the risks taken.

What is next for Volkswagen? As we closed for press, five days after the story of emissions-test cheating broke, changes in staff were still coming thick and fast.

Matthias Müller's (pictured) new role as Group CEO leaves a big vacancy at Porsche, which is left without a leader. Volkswagen Group's plan to band the Stuttgart brand together with Bentley and Bugatti into a single 'sports' arm of parent company may increase instability in the short term. Lamborghini will remain under Audi's control.

Wolfgang Dürheimer, current CEO of Bentley and Bugatti, is the former head of Porsche's R&D department and is the favourite to oversee the new Porsche Brand Group, with Porsche's board member for production and logistics, Oliver Blume, set to take

VW MUSICAL CHAIRS



over the role Müller has vacated. He will answer directly to Dürheimer if the latter heads the group.

Other changes within the Group include Winfried Vahland, formerly chairman of the board of directors and CEO at Skoda, being handed the task of heading up a new 'North America region' with current Volkswagen US boss Michael Horn remaining as president and CEO of Volkswagen Group of America.

Vahland's role at Skoda is filled by Bernhard Maier, who was previously sales and marketing boss of Porsche.

SEAT chairman Jürgen Stackman takes over from Christian Klingler as board member for sales and marketing at Volkswagen. Klingler is leaving Volkswagen in a planned departure unrelated to the crisis.

While Volkswagen has been quick to ring these changes – a whole new corporate structure and board of management was implemented in just seven days – the biggest, toughest and in some cases seemingly impossible challenge is to win back the faith of those customers who feel cheated by the company that started by making a car for the people. Volkswagen v2.0 starts now and its journey is going to be fascinating to follow.

Peugeot to make hottest hatch ever?

493bhp 308 R Hybrid could go into production – if the French firm can make the sums work

PEUGEOT TOLD EVO AT September's Frankfurt motor show that it wants to put its 493bhp 308 R Hybrid into production, but it's a matter of proving the business case for the plug-in hybrid hatchback.

First seen at the Paris motor show last autumn, the 308 R Hybrid is on a par with the Group B homologation hatchback specials of the 1980s for mind-boggling specification.

If Peugeot can make the numbers work, the R will feature the same 1.6-litre four-cylinder turbocharged engine fitted to the new 308 GTi (see page 49), the RCZ R and the 208 GTi. In the R it will produce the same 266bhp as it does in the top-spec 308 GTi 270. Then it gets technical with a 113bhp electric motor for each axle and a 3kWh/400-volt lithium-ion battery positioned beneath the rear seat. Drive is via a six-speed automatic gearbox.

As with other plug-in hybrids, the 308 R offers a number of driving modes, but rather than being economy focused they major on increasing the car's performance, just as they do in the likes of Porsche's 918 Spyder. In regular Road mode up to 296bhp and

295lb ft of torque is available, the petrol engine able to offer its full 266bhp and supported by up to 30bhp from the rear electric motor. Switch to Sport mode and the rear motor ups its output to the full 113bhp, with the front electric motor providing an additional 15bhp and total torque increases to 391lb ft. Choose the Hot Lap mode and the front motor matches the 113bhp of the rear to provide you with the full 493bhp to propel the 1405kg hatch to 62mph in four seconds. (If you're wondering where the extra 1bhp came from, the figures are actually 266.3bhp plus 2 x 113.4bhp.) Or you could drive around in full electric mode, with the front and rear electric motors producing 54 and 113bhp respectively.

Will Peugeot build it? The French manufacturer is a mass-volume car maker, known for its small hatchbacks and family of MPVs and SUVs. A near-500bhp, four-wheel-drive hot hatch will get the enthusiasts salivating but it needs to do more than that – it needs the bean counters to be happy it will turn a profit. But if that happens, Peugeot could have the hottest hatch ever produced on its hands.

538lb ft

Combined maximum torque generated in Hot Lap mode

80mm

wider front and rear tracks to accommodate electric motors

70g/km

CO2 output

155mph

Limited top speed

200kg

Additional weight of the hybrid powertrain





Alfa lays down hot Ring time

Alfa Romeo claims that its forthcoming Giulia has lapped the Nürburgring some 13 seconds quicker than BMW's M4 coupe. The new turbocharged V6 saloon is said to have completed the 12.9-mile lap in an astonishing 7min 39sec – a second faster than both the Lamborghini Murciélago

and Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren.

The Giulia that set the lap time was a Cloverleaf model, which uses a 503bhp Ferrari-developed twin-turbo V6. The Cloverleaf is said to weigh 1525kg, accelerate to 62mph in 3.9sec and top 191mph.

Alfa Romeo has also announced that the

Giulia Cloverleaf will be available in five colours: Competizione Red, Trofeo White, Vulcano Black, Vesuvio Grey and Montecarlo Blue. The car's price has been announced, too, but only for the Italian market. It equates to around £53,000. UK order books will open during summer next year.

Turbocharging for new 349bhp S4

Audi revealed its new S4 Saloon and Avant models at last month's Frankfurt motor show, confirming that it has ditched the outgoing car's supercharged V6 engine for a new 3-litre twin-turbocharged V6.

Scheduled to reach showrooms in 2016,

the new S4 produces 349bhp (up 21bhp) and 369lb ft (up from 324lb ft), with the latter arriving at 1300rpm and hanging on until 4500rpm. A consequence of the new engine is a drop in 0-62mph time to 4.7sec – a 0.2sec

improvement over the outgoing car.

Along with a new engine, the S4 also gains a new eight-speed gearbox driving all four wheels. Up to 85 per cent of the engine's torque can be sent to the rear axle. S-line suspension as

standard lowers the car 23mm compared to a normal A4 and Audi's Drive Select module, which allows individual programming of the engine, gearbox, steering and diff, is also standard.

The new S4 goes go on sale in 2016.



15mph

The speed Jaguar's F-pace dropped to during the highest part of its record-breaking loop-the-loop.

850

Tons of steel used by Mercedes to create the inside of its Frankfurt motor show stand.

£150,000

The cost of the Breitling Mulliner Tourbillon clock inside Bentley's Bentayga SUV (not standard...).

£28,940

The starting price confirmed for Ford's forthcoming 345bhp Focus RS.

Pure electric Porsche follows Tesla's lead



The Mission E concept: a four-door, fully electric Porsche saloon car. On a motor show stand in Frankfurt it looked every bit the show-stopper, but under its skin it reveals more about Porsche's forthcoming small saloon car, codenamed 'Pajun'.

While the Pajun will offer the full spectrum of internal combustion engines, including six- and eight-cylinder variants, it will also be Porsche's first all-electric car. Mission E provides the clearest

indication yet as to how Porsche will do that.

With a motor on each axle utilising technology from the company's 919 Hybrid LMP1 race car, peak power is 592bhp – enough to send the E to 62mph in 3.5sec and 124mph in under 12sec. It will also, claims Porsche, lap the Nordschleife in under eight minutes.

Range, of course, is as important as performance, and Porsche claims to have made huge strides. Using an 800-volt port, the E can charge to 80 per

cent battery capacity in just 15 minutes.

Fully charged, it is said to have a 311-mile range. Any production car would also be compatible with VW Group's planned 400-volt charging network.

While the E's 918 Spyder-inspired four-door looks will be toned down for production, the concept shows that Porsche will spearhead VW Group's all-electric car programme, and the zero-emissions Pajun will start by taking on Tesla's Model S.

Patrice Ratti

Anyone cut from the evo cloth owes a lot to this man. Renault Sport Technologies' managing director lays out his strategy

RENAULT
SPORT

**RATTI'S
AMBITIONS**



To have 50/50 Europe and rest-of-world sales (currently 65/35)



To build more specific RS models for markets outside Europe



To continue to build cars for driving aficionados



To see Renault back in Formula 1 with a full works team



To offer manual and dual-clutch gearboxes in RSs

There's not a "magical" thing with Renaultsport. It's a lot of work with people who really master the dynamics of a car. If there's one thing, its optimisation, and the expertise of our engineers who can match the needs of chassis and suspension, and can optimise the former very quickly. I think that's our main strength.

'Then of course you need good aero, good engines – but where we are very good is chassis optimisation. Yes, we can do it on Mégane, but we can also do it on Sandero and other cars [Dacia has just announced a Sandero RS for South America]. The Sandero was never imagined to have a sports version. But we can really transform the car, thanks to our expertise. So it's nothing magical – just a lot of hard work!

'We also have expertise in computer simulation systems. What is important at Renault is that the same engineer who does the simulation will drive the car. We have a pilot – a real racing driver – who works with the engineer, and the engineer is a pretty good driver too, and they all work together. They work very closely with the people on the drawing board, too.

'Can we build another Clio V6 or Sport Spider? There is no taboo as long as we have customers and we can make money. If there is a business case for such a car then why not? But it is not easy to meet the quality requirements and customer requirements and still make money. But there is nothing forbidden. Certainly there is renewed enthusiasm for RS cars, but our priority today is to be more international and make more derivatives from the range – as you can see, we are expanding the global range of Renault. But if we can build the business case for a new Clio V6 then why not? I worked on the Spider years ago, in another job, but today, with safety and emissions requirements, it's much more difficult.

'My favourite Renaultsport is the Mégane. The Clio, which has been criticised by the purists – you're probably one of them – has had some of its defects corrected with the Trophy version. But still it's a DCT and that's heavier than a manual transmission. We're convinced that the market is moving towards that, but it isn't moving as fast as we expected when we made that decision. Ford went

the other way. Their car is closer to the Clio II than the Clio IV. So we went in opposite directions.

'We learnt a lot about DCT. We made a breakthrough in Asia and Australia – there the car has very good reviews. In Europe it is mixed. We analyse the reasons why people buy, or why they don't buy, and DCT is number two in the

“Can we build another Clio V6 or Sport Spider? As long as we have the customers”

reasons they buy and number two in the reasons they don't buy, so...

'In the future, maybe we'll have a double offer [manual and DCT], but for this Clio it is too late – it is something we needed to decide at the beginning of the project. We don't regret having done that. I think we could've made the Sport and Cup more different. But finally, probably, manual transmission has a future!

'It's not time to talk about a new Renaultsport Mégane, because we have just launched a new Mégane, we have a GT Line, and the Renaultsport Mégane is still on sale, but of course there will be a Renaultsport of the new car – and I'll make sure you get the information.

'The new Mégane is interesting because we have the four-wheel steering and this opens up a lot of interesting things. When we introduced it on the Laguna it was for safety and for low-speed manoeuvrability. With Mégane, we've done it in the "pleasure to drive" spirit and we found many interesting things. In particular you have high-speed stability and at low speeds you have agility, for the gymkhana, or tight roads.

'And you can really feel it. At high speeds you just set the steering wheel and you go through – you don't have a transitory period. If I'm honest, we were not convinced at the beginning – there was a lot of discussion within the specialists at RS whether it was worth it. The "drivers" said, "We don't need it." Now they are convinced.

'If there has been any doubt with the Clio RS that we were losing our cutting

edge or our will to make really fun cars, that's not the case. It was not our intention – we thought the market was moving towards DCT. With the Clio RS DCT Trophy we have built the best car we can with the technology.

'We are really keen to build cars that are for the purists. If some have been disappointed by the Clio RS, we are

sorry about it, but it helped us find new customers and in the future we probably need to differentiate more between the manual transmission and DCT. I still think that it is the future, but it's not coming as soon as we expected.

'And the Mégane RS Trophy – the really radical cars? We will continue to make those sorts of cars.'

DESIGNED BY DRIVERS

Patrice Ratti and Renaultsport are a breath of fresh air. Ratti could have dodged the subject of the DCT Clio, but instead offered an honest appraisal while suggesting manuals are still part of Renaultsport's future. Not only that, but when he talks about building cars for purists, it's not lip service – he's passionate about it, and that passion permeates through Renaultsport. You've also got to respect a man who employs simulation engineers who are good enough drivers to verify their data.

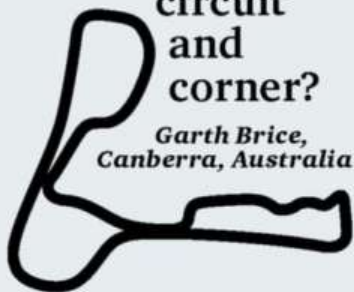
I sense that Ratti told me what I wanted to hear about future 'special Renaultsport' models (Clio V6s and Sport Spiders), but deep down I think we both know that we won't see cars of this type again. However, the next-generation Renaultsport Mégane Trophy, with – I'm speculating – a manual 'box, four-wheel steer, Öhlins dampers and over 300bhp has to be one of the most anticipated cars of recent times.

Nick Trott

ASK GOODWIN

What's your
favourite UK
circuit
and
corner?

Garth Brice,
Canberra, Australia



Will you allow me to separate the two? I reckon Britain's best circuit is Oulton Park. It's got the lot. Devil's Corner is a challenging bend where getting it wrong is rather bad news; there are undulations and crests, which are essential for a really interesting track; and lastly, it has beautiful surroundings. But Oulton isn't my favourite for the simple reason that I've only raced there once and it was a fiasco involving a Lotus Elise with some important gear ratios missing.

No, my favourite is Cadwell Park. You won't be surprised at this, because Cadwell is a bit like Oulton in miniature. I've never raced a car at the Lincolnshire circuit but I've raced bikes there lots of times, both before Jonathan Palmer tweaked it to make it safer and afterwards. I found it pretty hairy in both formats but extremely exciting. I'm a real wuss when it comes to wheelies, so I only have one photo of myself on the back wheel over the famous 'mountain'.

Choosing my favourite corner is easy: it's Paddock Hill at Brands Hatch (the circuit itself I love and nearly put it ahead of Cadwell Park). Paddock also has my favourite gravel trap. Favourite because I've spent a lot of time in it, especially over a weekend of TVR Tuscan racing where twice I misjudged my braking point and spun into the kitty litter. The corner is also one of my favourites to spectate at. You don't get to see overtaking, but the cars look fantastic coming down the hill. I was at the last F1 race at Brands and I'll never forget the sight of Senna and Mansell.

And the most difficult corner? Woodcote at Goodwood.

For more 'Ask Goodwin' columns, visit evo.co.uk



WHAT DO THE LATE Lotus F1 driver Gunnar Nilsson, Monkee Mike Nesmith, *Rockford Files* star James Garner and Steve McQueen have in common? Can't get it? They've all taken part in the Baja 1000 desert race on the Baja California Peninsula in Mexico. Nilsson was a multiple winner on motorcycles, James Garner ran a team and drove himself, McQueen took part on a bike and history doesn't tell us what the Monkee took part in or on.

The Dakar Rally doesn't hold my interest now that it's held in South America and that it's so highly commercialised. The original Paris-to-Dakar event that started in the late 1970s was a much more amateur affair and I remember going to Paris one year to watch the start. The Mexican race is still much more amateur and laid-back. The first event was held in 1967 and ran from Tijuana to La Paz, in Bolivia, and covered 849 miles. The race has never been 1000 miles long but 'Baja 849' wouldn't sound as cool. Some years, the race is point-to-point and others it's a loop race starting and finishing in the same place.

The first race was won by a pair driving a Meyers Manx dune-buggy. One of that pair was the



Baja 1000

Everyone has heard of Mexico's *Mad Max*-esque desert race, but how many have seriously considered making it a part of their holiday?

Above: factory-supported teams are often trailed by helicopters and enjoy huge publicity. **Right:** start times are staggered to stop the trucks flattening the bikes



father of the dune-buggy, Bruce Meyers. Then as now, the range of vehicle types taking part was wide and varied. There's always been a motorcycle class, split into different capacities, and numerous four-wheeled classes including trucks and, of course, the eponymous Baja Buggies – VW Beetles with their fronts and rears trimmed back and serious suspension modifications. The winners in 1967 took 27 hours to complete the course, with the first bike coming home an hour later.

Today's event, which this year takes place on November 17-22, is organised, as it has been since the 1970s, by an organisation called SCORE, which stands for Southern California Off Road Enterprises. The range of classes is vast, with everything from traditional Baja Buggies to tube-framed 3-litre specials. Bikes are split into capacity classes, but there are also vintage categories for riders in age groups,

including one for over-65s. I might start training for that one. The oldest competitor to ever take part was actor Paul Newman, who raced a four-wheeler in 2004 when he was 80 years old.

Now, you might be wondering why Goodwin is getting revved up by a race in which the field blasts off into inhospitable desert to not be seen again for around 18 hours. Good point, but remember: this is an American event and in America they have a very different approach to motorsport. The customer, in this case the spectator, is king, and the organisers of the Baja 1000 make sure that there's plenty for the punter to do and see before the event starts. For example, on the Wednesday there's a massive party in the evening from 7pm to midnight that's sponsored by Monster Energy and to which everyone is invited (it's not quite like the Formula 1 Paddock Club). The

following evening there's a *papas* (delicious Mexican potatoes) and beer street party, again sponsored by Monster Energy.

On race day, which is the Friday, the bikes start first, early in the day, and the trucks and four-wheel classes kick-off three-and-a-half hours later so that the bikers don't get pulverised.

Clearly, the Baja 1000 would be the perfect event to attend at the beginning of a family holiday in California. You don't need to be told how to get to California because it's simply a matter of jumping on a plane to Los Angeles, but if you want the desert race to be the start of a holiday, or indeed *the* holiday, then fly to San Diego.

The event this year is a loop race that starts and finishes in Ensenada. The city is only 85 miles south of San Diego, so a rental car

is the obvious method of transport. However, the problem is that many car rental companies (certainly in my experience the biggies such as Hertz and Alamo) won't allow you to take cars across the Mexican border. This is a hurdle, then, that might require some in-depth research to overcome. The alternative would be to fly from San Diego to Ensenada or, if you're really up for an experience, take public transport.

Desert racing, and the Baja 1000 in particular, has been a major influence on specialist cars over the decades that it's been running. It kick-started the early '70s beach-buggy craze and the Baja Bug concept. More than that, you could argue that Ariel's fantastic new Nomad (driven in *evo* 210) wouldn't have happened without the inspiration of the Baja 1000 and races like it.

San Diego

Ensenada

BAJA CALIFORNIA,
MEXICO

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Right: Porsche's dual-clutch PDK gearbox; with two clutches (labelled) it can shift between gears in an instant



FOCUS

AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSIONS

IF *THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS* gets remade in a decade or two, the chances are that Dom Toretto's line accusing Brian O'Conner of 'granny shifting, not double-clutching like you should' will no longer be in the script. It won't be needed because automatic gearboxes are steadily replacing traditional gearstick-and-clutch setups. But how do the different types of automatic work, and what are their pros and cons?

TORQUE CONVERTER

Conventional automatics feature a torque converter in place of a clutch. A torque converter is a sealed unit that transfers rotational force from the engine to drive in the gearbox through the viscosity of the fluid contained within.

Torque converters are inherently inefficient due to parasitic losses from the fluid between the impeller (which receives mechanical energy from the engine) and the turbine (which transfers it into drive for the wheels). However, power losses can be avoided with the addition

of a lock-up clutch that connects the engine and gearbox when their speeds are closely matched.

AUTOMATED MANUAL (AMT)

An AMT is very similar to a regular manual transmission – the gear sets and clutch are largely the same. However, servos or hydraulics automate the process of changing gear: the depressing of the clutch, the changing of gear and the re-engaging of the clutch is all robotised.

A potential problem comes in the form of lurching gearchanges, as the automated mechanism can take up to a second to complete the task. However, the AMT has a similar efficiency to a fully manual gearbox, at around 97 per cent, and is one of the lightest automatic options.

DUAL-CLUTCH (DCT)

ADCT has vastly reduced shift times compared to an AMT. It uses two clutches that sit concentrically; the larger, outer one typically serves the odd ratios, the smaller, inner one the evens.

The system's electronics prepare the next gear in anticipation of a shift point being reached or a paddle being pulled by the driver, then when this happens the clutches swap engagement – often with no discernible lag in shift times.

CONTINUOUSLY VARIABLE (CVT)

CVTs don't use predetermined gear sets. They use a belt (or chain) tensioned between two pulleys of variable diameter. In simple terms, imagine each pulley is cone shaped and can be moved side to side; having the belt running over a part of the cone with a smaller or larger diameter changes the gearing. This means a huge range of effective gear ratios can be emulated.

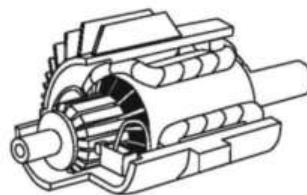
The main benefit is that the engine can be kept either in its most efficient range (at low revs) or at its peak power (at higher engine speeds), depending on which is more appropriate. The major drawback is that CVTs can't handle much power, and the often constant engine note isn't very appealing for performance applications.



ASK MIKE

Your tech questions answered

Q Why don't electric cars need a transmission or clutch?
– Nick Jago



A If you have ever changed up into the wrong gear, you will understand that an internal combustion engine (ICE) has a specific torque band.

Indeed, the gearbox on an ICE car is there to make the best use of that torque band over a range of speeds. A DC electric motor, however, produces its peak torque almost from zero revs and can spin incredibly fast (a Tesla Model S's motor will reach 16,000rpm). Moreover, by simply switching phases, no reverse gear is needed as the motor will run in reverse.

This range means electric cars don't really need gearboxes, although they can be used to increase efficiency and help battery charge go further.

Send your question to experts@evo.co.uk

TECH GAME-CHANGERS

CARBONFIBRE

First road-car application:
Bugatti EB110 **When:** 1991



You'll struggle to find any modern supercar that doesn't make use of carbonfibre – or, to give it its full

name, carbonfibre reinforced polymer.

Carbonfibre is a composite, meaning that it is composed of more than one material. Strands of woven carbon are suspended in a polymer matrix, often a thermoset epoxy resin. The resulting composite

is around a fifth lighter than steel but is equally strong (or even stronger).

One drawback is carbonfibre's lower maximum operating temperature. It's possible to play with the crystalline structure of the polymer to increase heat resistance,

but carbonfibre still can't match steel, which melts at around 1300C. Epoxy, meanwhile, reverts to a rubbery state at around 180C. Interestingly, the carbon fibres themselves can withstand up to 3500C, so it's the polymer matrix

that holds back carbonfibre composites.

Another downside is that carbonfibre can cost up to 20 times more than steel to manufacture. But more affordable and better performing composites are just around the corner.



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FIRST DRIVE

CONTINENTAL SPORTCONTACT 6

This is Continental's latest ultra-high-performance tyre, the SportContact 6. Designed predominantly for pure sports cars such as the Porsche 911 and Audi R8, the new tyre replaces the ContiSportContact 5P (which won the 2015 *evo* Tyre Test) and is said to make particularly impressive gains in steering precision, high-speed stability and dry handling performance. Proof of the new tyre's calibre, Continental says, lies in the new Honda Civic Type R's thumping 7:50.63 Nürburgring lap record.

Continental says steering precision has improved by 14 per cent and high-speed stability by 10 per cent thanks to an innovative reinforcement material called Aralon 350. Made up of aramid and nylon strands, the material (which sits between the tread and internal belts) increases strength but retains flexibility,

ensuring the tyre can respond quickly to steering inputs on a wide variety of road surfaces.

Continental says the SportContact 6's micro-flexibility is also significantly better than that of its predecessor, helping the tyre to maximise its contact patch. A new tread pattern combining big shoulder blocks and interlocking elements is also said to improve dry handling by 11 per cent.

There are few places better equipped to host a performance tyre launch than the Blister Berg Drive Resort in Germany. With high- and low-speed corners spread over an uneven landscape, it's a near-perfect venue to test Continental's claims. Unfortunately, the weather was anything but.

Fast-approaching cumulonimbi meant we had just a few minutes of dry running on one of the resort's

smaller circuits. Luckily the first SportContact 6-shod car we sampled was a familiar one – the excellent, four-wheel-drive Volkswagen Golf R.

Immediately, the Golf's agile chassis felt like it had gained another level of precision on turn-in. Traction was good too, and pleasingly the car's playful rear-axle lost none of its enthusiasm. Then the rain came.

The test wasn't completely lost, because despite the fact that the 6's focus is on dry tarmac, Continental quotes a two per cent improvement in wet-weather performance and a four per cent improvement for on-the-limit handling.

There were two more SportContact 6-shod hot hatches to test – Audi's RS3 and Mercedes-AMG's A45. While neither car's setup offers substantial amounts of steering feel, the SportContact 6 did appear to hasten steering response in both. And as the rain continued to fall, the way in which the tyre behaved beyond the limit of grip was impressively predictable (particularly with the Audi), making it easy to maintain small, on-throttle slides.

Passing judgement on a new tyre in isolation is always a tricky task, but we'd summarise our first impressions of the SportContact 6 as follows: there are noticeable improvements in steering response and sidewall stiffness compared to the ContiSportContact 5P. It doesn't feel quite as track-biased as Michelin's Pilot Super Sport tyre, but wet performance is comparable. Overall, the tyre is a noticeable step forward.

Prices look set to remain unchanged from the 5P's, which means a starting price of around £120 per tyre. At launch, the SportContact 6 will be available in 41 sizes, ranging from 19 to 23 inches in diameter.



THE SURPRISING COST TO YOU OF UNDERINFLATED TYRES

A new study by Michelin has concluded that UK motorists are wasting £246m a year on fuel and pumping out 538,000 tons of excess carbon dioxide by driving on underinflated tyres. The tyre maker assessed 23,741 cars over eight years and found 62 per cent of their tyres were running the wrong pressures.

More concerning was that 37 per cent of cars were running with dangerously low tyre pressures – 7 psi or more below the manufacturer's recommendation. Five per cent of cars tested also had punctured tyres.

Despite efforts to increase awareness, the number of cars running underinflated tyres on UK roads remained roughly consistent during the length of the study.

The cost of this negligence adds up quickly. Running a car with tyres 7 psi below the recommended pressure knocks an average of 1mpg from a car's fuel economy figure. Michelin estimates that such a car typically wastes 18.2 litres of fuel each year. Low pressures also accelerate tyre wear and compromise the contact patch and braking distances.

We doubt many of the offenders are *evo* readers – enthusiasts are among the best at maintaining their cars – but given that we all share the same roads, increased awareness would benefit us all.

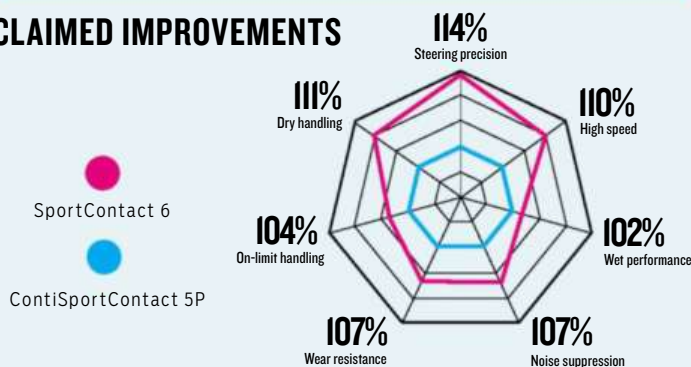
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Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for Ford Mondeo range: urban 27.2-100.9 (10.4-2.8), extra urban 47.9-85.6 (5.9-3.3), combined 37.2-78.5 (7.6-3.6). Official CO₂ emissions 176-94g/km.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results (EU Directive and Regulation 692/2008), are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience. Vehicle shown is the Ford Mondeo Titanium with optional Ruby Red special metallic paint, 19" alloy wheels, panoramic roof, and LED Adaptive Lighting.

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A	D	G	X	X	L	Q	U	O	S	N	T	C

CRÉATIVE TECHNOLOGIE

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CITROËN prefers TOTAL. Model shown: C4 Cactus PureTech 82 manual Flair. OTR price £16,490 (incl. Polar White paint and Chocolate Airbump® at extra cost of £250 and £150 respectively).

Official Government Fuel Consumption Figures (litres per 100km/mpg) and CO₂ Emissions (g/km) (Range). Highest: Citroën C4 Cactus PureTech 110 S&S manual: Urban 5.8/48.7, Extra Urban 4.0/70.6, Combined 4.7/60.1, 107 CO₂. Lowest: Citroën C4 Cactus BlueHDi 100 S&S manual with 15 inch wheels: Urban 3.5/80.7, Extra Urban 3.0/94.2, Combined 3.1/91.1, 82 CO₂. MPG figures are achieved under official EU test conditions, intended as a guide for comparative purposes only, and may not reflect actual on-the-road driving conditions.

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lifestyle-bugatti.com

MINI BY TUMI TRAVEL DUFFEL £395

Tumi's tie-in with Mini has resulted in some colourful products. Predictably, some feature Union-flag decoration, but this duffel is relatively subtle. It's also two bags in one: the front section unzips and unfurls to act as a backpack.

tumi.com

BRIC'S MAGELLANO HOLDALL £295

At 55cm wide, this holdall is more compact than the others here, but Bric's focus on craftsmanship and quality is reflected in the price. The bag's body is leather-effect PVC, but the real-leather handles give the aroma of a high-end luxury car...

caseluggage.com

BRIC'S X-TRAVEL HOLDALL £149

The X-Travel is a similar size to the Magellano (above), but is a great deal more affordable. It's constructed from satin nylon fabric, and inside you'll find a removable smaller bag – useful for storing travel documents.

caseluggage.com

TED BAKER MEDIUM CLIPPER £175

Despite the Ted Baker name, this is one of the more affordable options here. It's also one of the largest, with a 45-litre capacity. The grey fabric and tan leather combination is inspired by the company's suits.

caseluggage.com





BMW keeps a watch on tech

Innovations from the likes of BMW and Apple mean the days when a driver interacts with a car using only controls in the car itself are disappearing

THE MORE TIME YOU SPEND with the BMW i8, the more you realise just how exciting an ownership experience it is for the lucky few. No, the car isn't up there with the true greats in dynamic terms, but as a £104,540 package it's an incredible thing for the money.

The i8 boasts a complex petrol-electric hybrid powertrain, a carbonfibre construction, concept-car looks, a class-leading infotainment system and – vital for people like us – a fun driving experience to boot.

The latest addition to the i8 is Apple Watch connectivity. BMW had already developed a smartphone app for the i8, which was available at the car's launch, but has now taken things a step further, allowing owners to remotely control functions on the car directly from their wrists.

Admittedly, these functions are limited, but you can control the heating system, flash the headlights to find your car in a car park (presumably a car park full of other i8s...) or, should you so desire, show

your i8's location on a map.

Sadly, the smartphone app's ability to unlock the car remotely hasn't been added to the Watch app, meaning you won't be able to replace your car keys with a neat device on your wrist.

The smartphone app takes things a step further, allowing you to share your 'eco stats' with the rest of the i8 community and see who has been doing the most boring driving.

What both the Apple Watch and the smartphone app can do is show you a basic overview of your particular

i8, complete with a colour-matched version of your car on the device's screen. Battery charge, fuel levels and remaining range are displayed, and the smartphone app can even build a navigation route based on these figures and then deliver it to the i8's iDrive system before you have stepped into the car.

As is generally the way with any device-led technology, the i8's connectivity is hampered by that bugbear of the 21st century: mobile phone reception. Sometimes sending



“The smartphone app can build a satnav route based on the remaining range and deliver it to the iDrive”



Left: at £479, the Apple Watch is on the expensive side, even for the owner of a £100k sports car. **Above:** the BMW i smartphone app has even greater functionality

data from your phone or Apple Watch to the i8 can take more than a few minutes. This is problematic if you intend on using your phone (rather than the set of keys you left at home) to unlock the car.

What BMW must be praised for is the precedent it has set with the i8's user interface and connectivity. Unlike some competitors' efforts, nearly everything that is included is genuinely useful, easy to control and laid out in such a clear and obvious manner that even the least tech-

savvy owner would be able to get their head around it. We just wish there was a little more functionality.

Data connectivity is certainly the next step for infotainment systems. Jeep learned a lesson about security recently when one of its cars was remotely hacked (for demonstration purposes) and then controlled, eventually causing it to crash. But done right, connectivity could improve an ownership experience.

Tesla already remotely updates its cars, but this is just the tip of

the iceberg. The i8 hints at a future where a smartphone or watch app would be all owners needed to interact with their cars.

Imagine, once automation really takes off, sending your electric or hybrid car to charge itself before you have even got into it, all via a small screen on your wrist. For some, apps are the most powerful way of interacting with the rest of the world. Cars simply seem to be the next thing on Apple's 'to do' list.

Hunter Skipworth

NOW & THEN

Head-up displays



Every few years, a carmaker will claim it has redesigned the automotive interior in such a way that vital data, such as speed, is easier than ever to see at a glance. Usually this involves moving the speedometer to the centre of the dashboard, before moving it back again.

These are half-measures, however, because head-up displays put data on the windscreen. Used in aerospace since the 1940s, General Motors was first to implement an automotive version, in 1988 with the Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme (pictured above).

Nissan followed suit soon after, with the 240SX in 1989, and GM once again set the pace in 1998 with the first colour display – on the C5 Chevrolet Corvette – and introduced night-vision in 2000 with the Cadillac DeVille.

Where does the technology go next? Jaguar Land Rover has trialled augmented reality windscreens (below), placing navigation data and even racing lines in the driver's field of view.



ON
OR
OFF?

Heated windscreen

'Definitely on,' says Steven Raith on the **evo** Facebook page. Standard on many cars, Ford offers it even on inexpensive models. 'It's amazing, even in our mild-weathered country – and saves buying de-icer.'



1970 45 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS INSPIRATION IN THE PURSUIT OF PRECISION

A blend of vintage design and contemporary precision, the sporty and ingenious TUDOR Heritage Chrono line symbolises the marriage of design and mechanical performance. In 1970, the TUDOR Oysterdate chronograph set a track record in watch-making.

TUDOR HERITAGE CHRONO

Self-winding mechanical movement, waterproof to 150 m, steel case 42 mm.
Visit tudorwatch.com and explore more.



TUDOR
WATCH YOUR STYLE

WATCH TECH

Raymond Weil Nabucco Cello Tourbillon



When Raymond Weil established his watch house in 1977, he decided from day one that its future would be developed around his lifelong love of music. The £27,500 Nabucco Cello Tourbillon continues that mission by taking design cues from, perhaps bizarrely, a cello.

The movement bridges supporting the tourbillon escapement (the device that transfers power from the mainspring to the timekeeping part of the watch) and the mainspring barrel itself take the form of a cello's distinctive f-holes, while the hands are formed in the shape of a cello bow and the five lines of a musical stave are represented in the grooved bezel.

Perhaps the wackiest feature, however, are the four tiny steel strings stretched taught across the dial, which combine with the f-hole bridges to create the illusion of an instrument in miniature. All completely frivolous and unnecessary, of course – but that's high-end watch making for you.



THIS MONTH

Tissot T-Race MotoGP 2015 Automatic Chronograph

From: tissot.ch
Price: £995

Tissot has added this new chronograph to its line-up of motorcycle watches inspired by the company's long-standing sponsorship of the MotoGP series. Rich in two-wheeled imagery, the PVD-coated watch features a 'brake disc' bezel, shock-absorber style strap attachments and a wheel-shaped winding rotor that is visible through the sapphire crystal case back. The embossed dial also gets a monochrome chequered flag pattern, and the watch is delivered in a helmet-shaped box that doubles as a winder. There will be 3333 examples available worldwide.



Versace Mystique Sport

Price: £1080-1380
From: versace.com

We didn't previously expect to see the name 'Versace' here on the **evo** watch page, but the horological arm of the Italian fashion house assures us that its new 'Mystique Sport' collection was born from the world of motor racing. At 46mm in diameter, the watch is certainly large enough to be seen at a glance, while the tachymeter scale could be useful for speed and distance calculations during timed trials. A further automotive touch comes in the form of a leather strap decorated with a 'carbon look' finish. A Swiss-made quartz movement keeps the price down, but should prove reliable.



Farer 'Carter'

Price: £425
From: selfridges.com

This UK watch brand is so new it doesn't yet have a website. Founded by former TK Maxx chairman Paul Sweetenham and marketer Jono Holt, Farer is set to offer a range of affordable quartz watches named after celebrated British explorers. The travel-orientated GMT model pictured here commemorates Howard Carter, who famously discovered the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamun. The brand also has an automotive tie-in, because Sweetenham and Holt are planning to complement Farer's horological activities with a 'curated' classic car sales business.

PORSCHE DESIGN THREE-HAND

As worn by Giles Taylor, director of design, Rolls-Royce

'Although I would not describe myself as a horophile, I have always loved the crafted nature of a good watch – incorporating leather, metal, graphics and fine mechanics into such a small space never fails to impress me.

'Since 2001, my daily watch has been

a simple, three-hand Porsche Design model. I chose it because I like the clear, military-inspired dial and the way the touch of red on the second hand adds a sense of elegance and finesse. It's also beautifully engineered, with a fine, brushed case and a seamlessly

integrated bracelet.

'Recently I also bought a Panerai Luminor GMT, which is useful for travelling because of the additional time zone indicator. Again, however, I really chose it for the cleanliness of the graphic and its chunky functionality.'



THE ÖHLINS EFFECT



How much can Öhlins Road & Track dampers improve the feel and pace of a performance car? Two Renaultsport Méganes, some challenging Welsh roads and a racetrack hold the answer...

by RICHARD MEADEN

THE CHALLENGE

Power and performance figures grab headlines, but when it comes to the very best drivers' cars – and the most informed drivers – road-holding, handling, ride quality and feel are what really count.

Successfully balancing these critical, and often conflicting, factors is the chassis engineer's eternal challenge, but one that Swedish suspension manufacturer Öhlins believes it has met with its range of 'Road & Track' dampers.

Shaped by four decades of experience and more than 300 motorsport world titles, Öhlins' Road & Track dampers feature ideas and technology taken from that hard-won racing success. Foremost amongst this transfer of knowledge and hardware is Öhlins' innovative Dual Flow Valve or DFV. This unique feature enables its Road & Track units to maintain the same damping characteristics in compression and rebound. The benefits are consistent performance and simple, simultaneous one-click adjustment of both the compression and rebound settings.

It's these trick internals that are the secret to Road & Track's combination of uncanny compliance and supreme control, and how they offer the widest possible range of adjustability for you to fine-tune your car to excel on the bumpiest road or the smoothest racetrack.

Whether fitted as original equipment by leading high-performance brands such as Renaultsport and Polestar, offered as an official factory option, or installed as an aftermarket upgrade, Road & Track suspension brings next-level dynamics and Öhlins' legendary quality within the reach of the discerning enthusiast.



But just what is the Öhlins Effect? Taking two Mégane Renaultsport 275 Trophies – one fitted with factory-standard suspension, the other equipped with Renaultsport's official Öhlins Road & Track suspension upgrade – we intend to find out by conducting a series of back-to-back tests. Using some of the UK's toughest roads and one of its most spectacular racetracks, we're going to explore the subjective differences in feel and also objectively measure the outright performance of both cars. Read on to find out what we think.



ON ROAD

For the first element of our test we're using the fabulous roads of north Wales. From flowing stretches of smooth tarmac to tighter, rougher sections with hidden crests and wicked compressions, our route is the ultimate measure of control, compliance and driver confidence.

First up is the standard Mégane Trophy – the yellow car on these pages. As you'd expect from *evo*'s current favourite hot hatchback, it's extremely impressive. Deep reserves of grip, plenty of front-end bite and a neutral-yet-lively balance give you the tools and the confidence to really enjoy the car's performance. Yes, its ride is unashamedly firm, but when it's in its element, compromised comfort feels like a fair trade for such livewire dynamics.

Swapping to the Öhlins-equipped car, we first drive the route with the dampers set to Renaultsport's factory road settings of five clicks on the front and ten on the rear (both from a possible 40 clicks, zero being fully stiff, 40 fully soft). The differences between this and the standard car are subtle, but tangible. There's a sense of tighter body control and precision, but despite the hard settings, initial impacts from the worst imperfections are more smoothly rounded off. It feels more positive, too: fractional improvements in response, grip and traction combining to make you feel more connected and confident. It's an impressive start.

Next, using the Road & Track's one-click

'You feel more in tune with the car's responses, and totally immersed'

bump and rebound adjustment, we soften the Öhlins-equipped Mégane to Renaultsport's recommended B-road settings and repeat the route. Immediately there's a marked improvement in ride quality, but not at the expense of that impressive precision or body control. The same pin-sharp agility and response remains, but with even greater poise and composure.

Despite the extra compliance, mid-corner compressions – which threaten to overwhelm the standard car's damping – leave the Öhlins-suspended car unfazed. And because the car is in closer harmony with the road surface, you feel more in tune with its responses, and totally immersed in the driving experience.

Take things to extremes and the differences can be felt even more clearly. Approaching one of the numerous crests to be found on these roads at the same speed in both cars, the standard Trophy is eager to take off, lands

heavily and takes a moment or two to regain its composure. The Öhlins-equipped car is less keen to launch over the crest, absorbing the initial compression force as the Mégane hits the upslope and controlling the release of energy as the wheels eventually leave the ground. On landing it touches down more smoothly, swiftly soaking up the first impact and controlling the rate of rebound with equal precision, preventing a secondary bounce and allowing the car to settle more quickly.

It's a graphic demonstration of the superior body control with the Öhlins Road & Track suspension, and underlines the lasting impression from our road route, namely that compliance is the key to unlocking an uncannily brilliant combination of control, ride comfort and confidence-inspiring feel on challenging and unpredictable roads.

ON TRACK

For the second element of our test we move to Anglesey Circuit. We're using the Coastal configuration, which packs plenty of challenges into its short but highly technical 1.5-mile lap. From traction-testing hairpins and fast corners that demand grip and confidence, to rapid direction changes and heavy braking zones, it's an *evo* favourite for good reason.

In addition to comparing the all-important



Above: black test car sports Öhlins dampers; yellow car has standard Renaultsport setup. **Above middle:** noting the lap times. **Above right:** one-click damper adjustment

subjective feel of each car here, we're adding objectivity by driving against the clock. It's worth mentioning that, as on the road, each car is fitted with the same type of OE Bridgestone tyre (not the optional Michelin Pilot Cup 2s, which are only available as an option with the Öhlins suspension) and carrying the same fuel load, thereby ensuring that, suspension apart, they are as close to identical as possible. Of course, as we're now on a racetrack we can push both cars to their absolute limits with stability control switched off.

Once again we begin with the standard car, and once again it more than upholds Renaultsport's reputation: the Mégane's trademark rapid-but-measured steering response, strong initial turn-in grip and rear-end stability being the stand-out qualities.

Only when pushing for a lap time do weaknesses become apparent – that encouraging bite at turn-in fading to understeer mid-corner as you chase the throttle through the quicker corners, a wriggle of momentary rear-end instability in the heaviest braking zones (most notably on the uphill 100mph-plus approach to Rocket) and a tendency to scrabble for traction exiting the hairpins. Nevertheless, it's a mightily impressive performance from an everyday-useable road car.

We first try the Öhlins-suspended car running Renaultsport's recommended damper

settings for a quick, dry track (four clicks front, nine rear). The improvement over the standard car is immediate, as from the moment you turn into the first corner you can feel there's more grip to lean on, and it lasts through the apex and on to the exit. Coupled to stronger traction, superior stability into the most critical braking area and an ability to ride the kerbs without deflecting the car from your chosen line, it feels like a car you can place with pin-point accuracy, even when driving at the limit.

The way it copes with kerbs is especially impressive, and it's largely thanks to that Dual Flow Valve technology. Just as on the road, during moments of very sharp suspension loading – such as those from a ridge, pothole or a racetrack's kerb – the DFV acts like a blow-off valve, allowing oil within the damper to bypass the compression and rebound ports. This rapid but controlled response ensures the wheel and tyre remain in contact with the ground, maintaining grip and traction when the standard car begins to run out of ideas. It's supremely effective and very, very clever.

First run completed, we switch to a more aggressive setup – two clicks on the front, five on the rear – to exploit Anglesey's smooth surface. The differences in feel are small, but there's definitely a sense that the Mégane is squeezing a fraction more from the tyres. You can place it with even greater precision and confidence, get

on the power even earlier and really chase the cleanest and most efficient lines. It also feels more rewarding and, crucially for track work, even more consistent, lap after lap.

So the Mégane fitted with Öhlins Road & Track dampers feels significantly better, but does the stopwatch back that subjective improvement with a quicker lap time? Of course it does. The first of our two setups finds 0.3sec over the standard car, the second, more aggressive setup increasing that advantage to 0.4sec – a best lap of 1:20.75 convincingly eclipsing the standard car's 1:21.15.

Yes, away from the racetrack that's but a few blinks of the eye, but in motorsport terms a performance advantage of four-tenths of a second around a 1.5-mile lap is a lifetime, especially in identical cars. That the quicker car also manages to consistently sustain its superior pace and be more enjoyable while it does so seals the deal for Öhlins Road & Track.

THE VERDICT

Delivering more pace and precision on track, bringing greater control, compliance and enjoyment on the road, our tests have proved the Öhlins Effect is real. Performance gains you can measure, dynamic improvements you can feel. Öhlins Road & Track will release the potential in your car, wherever you drive.

Vuhl 05

Test location: Bedford Autodrome, West Circuit **GPS:** 52.23662, -0.46956

285bhp, 310lb ft, 725kg and a £60k price tag – meet Mexico's 'road and track supercar'

Photography: Drew Gibson



FOR ALL THAT IT looks exactly like an uncompromising trackday machine, the

Vuhl 05 is actually, according to its maker, a lightweight supercar for both road and circuit use. The low-slung shape and aggressive styling give it the flavour of a competition car, but company founder Iker Echeverria reckons it's actually very easy and unintimidating to drive. The Vuhl is easy to pigeonhole

based on first impressions, then, so it's worth taking a moment to understand this nascent Mexican sports car company.

Iker and brother Guillermo founded Vuhl back in 2010. The car was officially launched at the Royal Automobile Club in London in 2013 and made its public debut at the Goodwood Festival of Speed that same year. Two years later, the Echeverria brothers are appointing dealers around the world and the

first examples of the 05 are being delivered to customers.

The car itself is built around an aluminium honeycomb monocoque. A steel rear subframe carries the suspension and drivetrain, and a three-stage crash structure is mounted at the front of the car. The engine is a 2-litre Ford EcoBoost driving the rear wheels via a six-speed manual gearbox and an open differential. The four-cylinder turbo engine develops 285bhp and 310lb ft

of torque – enough to propel the 725kg Vuhl to 62mph in 3.7sec and on to 152mph. The car is suspended by double wishbones all-round, while up front there are 310mm discs with four-piston calipers.

The standard of fit and finish is seriously impressive given that this is the company's first attempt, and the sparse cabin is equally well executed. The carbonfibre Tillett seats, brake-bias adjuster dial, in-built telemetry system and centrally



Above: the Vuhl 05's sharply styled bodywork is made of glassfibre, but carbonfibre body panels – which save 30kg – are available as a cost option

mounted GoPro camera point to the car's trackday leanings, but conversely the standard-fit tyre is nothing more exotic than a Michelin Pilot Super Sport.

That is a high-performance tyre, no doubt, but you'd normally expect to see uncompromising trackday rubber on a car such as this. Indeed, the Vuhl was initially developed on the Yokohama A048, but the Echeverrias were approached by Michelin and invited to its Ladoux

test track to spend a day trying out its extensive range of tyres. The Pilot Super Sport turned out to be only fractionally slower than the A048, but it performed far better in daily use and with more tread it has a significantly longer life expectancy.

That's probably the most vivid pointer of the Vuhl's pitch as a road-going sports car just as much as a trackday machine. Iker expects buyers to use their cars in the city and to that end it's been designed

This month

- VUHL 05** p40


Mexican newcomer packs a supercar-troubling power-to-weight ratio
- SKODA OCTAVIA vRS 230** p45


More power and a trick limited-slip diff for the fastest Octavia ever
- AUDI A4 3.0 TDI QUATTRO** p46


Smart looks and tech aplenty, but is the new A4 a credible 3-series rival?
- PEUGEOT 308 GTi 270** p49


A more practical version of the brilliant 208 GTi 30th Anniversary?
- MOUNTUNE FOCUS ST** p50


Tuner works its magic on a slightly underwhelming Ford hot hatch
- VAUXHALL VXR8 GTS AUTO** p52


Aussie-born muscle car is back, this time with a torque converter
- MK SPORTSCARS INDY RR** p54


200bhp Hayabusa-engined track car for £26k. Still want that Seven?

The team

With the Vuhl 05 our lead Driven this month, we asked the **evo** road test team to name their favourite track car.



NICK TROTT
Editor

'Today, the Atom 3.5R with wings, Ohlins and Sadev, please. Tomorrow, the Honda 2&4. Please. Build. It.'



STUART GALLAGHER
Managing editor

'evo's Caterham 420R. After every drive I'm convinced nothing is better at delivering the thrill of driving'



HENRY CATCHPOLE
Features editor

'Ariel Atom V8 500. Like having a modern DFV behind you and really has to be driven on the throttle'



DAN PROSSER
Road test editor

'A Prodrive-built E30 M3 rally car. Slidey fun and the best four-cylinder engine ever'



JETHRO BOVINGDON
Contributing editor

'I change my mind daily... Today I'll say BAC Mono. Beautiful engineering, amazing driving environment, unique experience'



RICHARD MEADEN
Contributing editor

'Broadley T76. An absolutely mighty thing in every respect. The ultimate analogue experience'



DAVID VIVIAN
Contributing editor

'Lamborghini Diablo SV, wet Goodwood, new and worn tyres. An experience'



ADAM TOWLER
Contributing road tester

'Noble M400 – for the handling, grip, lunging turbocharged performance and the unfiltered mini-Group C ambience'



Left: Sparco alloy wheels are 17 inches at the front and 18 at the rear. **Below:** six-speed gearbox is from Ford, as is the 2-litre turbocharged EcoBoost engine, here with 285bhp



'Even under full load in second gear, traction is close to absolute'

to be very easy to drive. We'll have to wait a little longer to try the car on the public road, but you only need to pull away from the pitlane to realise that the clutch and gearshift are light and slick – the drivetrain is lifted from a Ford hatchback, after all – and the unassisted steering is perfectly manageable.

In fact, in direct contrast to many cars of the Vuhl's ilk, the steering feels very light indeed, even at low speeds. Once up to speed it's direct and precise, but you do have to take a few corners to tune into the subtle messages from the front axle.



The car is very tautly controlled in corners with just enough roll to give an impression of the chassis being worked hard, and dive and squat are almost non-existent. Despite being a road-biased performance tyre, the Pilot Super Sport finds enormous turn-in and mid-corner grip. Only when you get the stopwatch out will you want for more bite, and even under full load in second gear, traction is close to absolute. The brake pedal, meanwhile, is firm but with a decent amount of travel, which means modulating braking inputs becomes intuitive and you

don't worry about locking the brakes (there's no ABS).

The chassis has been tuned for gentle understeer at the limit, which means it feels very safe on a circuit. Only if you turn into a corner clumsily and off throttle will the rear end come alive. More experienced circuit drivers might well crave a little more agility, but the chassis settings can be adjusted to achieve that.

Anybody using a Vuhl on track would do well to option the five-point harness. The road-biased, buckle-based 'half-harness' combined with the seat's lack of thigh support

means you have to cling on to the steering wheel to stay upright.

With so much power and torque in such a light package, straight-line performance is mighty and throttle-response is sharp, too, but the manner of delivery is underwhelming. It's a criticism that can be levelled at all turbocharged, lightweight sports cars, including the KTM X-Bow and Zenos E10. A high-revving, normally aspirated engine will always be more exciting in machines such as these, but the fundamental realities of cost and availability force small manufacturers towards off-the-shelf turbo units.

The Vuhl 05 is a very likeable machine and in lots of important ways it really does impress, but the £59,995 price tag is something of a sticking point. It may compare well to the likes of the £82,000 Lotus 3-Eleven, but if unadulterated driving is your thing, a Caterham Seven 420 offers a more thrilling experience at half the price. ✖

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 2000cc, turbo	n/a	285bhp @ 5600rpm	310lb ft @ 3000rpm	3.7sec (claimed)	152mph (claimed)	725kg (405bhp/ton)	£59,995

➤ Sheer pace, dynamics, build quality

➤ Expensive compared to some alternatives

evo rating

★★★★☆



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DMS 1M (EVO MARCH 12) "THERE'S A REAL RIP TO THE WAY THE REVS PILE ON ABOVE 4000RPM"

DMS SL65 BLACK SERIES (EVO OCTOBER '10) "IT FEELS LIKE THE LOVE CHILD OF AN SL65 AND A PORSCHE GT2"

DMS 135i (BMW CAR MAY '09) "THE STANDARD CAR IS GREAT BUT DMS HAVE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL"

DMS 997 TURBO 3.6 (EVO SEPTEMBER '08) "IT'S EPIC, HILARIOUS AND ADDICTIVE IN EVERY GEAR, YET DOCILE WHEN CRUISING"

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AUDI RS3/RSQ3 » 420+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
AUDI S3 / GOLF R » 373+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
AUDI 3.0TDi (ALL MODELS) » 315+ BHP
AUDI 3.0 Bi-TDi (ALL MODELS) » 380+ BHP
AUDI Q7/A8 4.2 TDi » 400+ BHP

BMW

M5 V10 » 548+ BHP (205 MPH)
X5M / X6M » 618+ BHP
1M » 411+ BHP
M3 E90/92 » 445 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
M135i/ M235i » 402 BHP
M4/M3 3.0T » 520+ BHP
M5 F10/M6 (STAGE 1) » 680 BHP
M5 F10/M6 (STAGE 2) » 730 BHP
F10 520D » 240 BHP
F10 530D » 305 BHP
335i/135i/X6 » 370+ BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
123D » 252 BHP

316D/216D/116D » 160 BHP
318D/218D/118D » 225 BHP
330D E90 » 296+ BHP
320D E90 » 215 BHP
420i/320i/220i/120i » 275+ BHP
435i/ F30 335i » 390 BHP
428i/328i » 295 BHP
535D / 335D / X5 SD » 355+ BHP
640D/335D/535D/435D » 390 BHP
730D » 305+ BHP
X5 4.0D / 740D » 370 BHP
X5 3.0D » 305 BHP
X6 X5.0i 4.4 » 500+BHP
X6 M50D/X5M50D/550D » 450 BHP

MERCEDES-BENZ

A200CDi/C200CDi/E200CDi » 175 BHP
A250/C250 » 260 BHP
A45/CLA45 » 420 BHP
C300 HYBRID » 285 BHP
A220CDi/C220CDi/E220CDi » 215 BHP
C350/CLS350/E350/S350 » 315 BHP
E400 /C450 » 420+ BHP
C400 » 400 BHP
'63' 5.5 Bi-TURBO ALL MODELS » 690+BHP
'500' 4.7 Bi-TURBO ALL MODELS » 498+BHP
S65 (W222) » 780 BHP
SL65 BLACK » 720+ BHP (+DELIMIT)
SL65 AMG » 690 BHP (+DE-LIMIT)
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997 CARRERA PDK » 368 BHP
997 CARRERA GTS » 435 BHP
997 GT3 UP » 436 BHP
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PANAMERA DIESEL » 315+ BHP

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Skoda Octavia vRS 230

Test location: Turvey Road, Bedfordshire **GPS:** 52.1773, -0.62061

More power for Skoda's only vRS offering, but the defining feature is a new limited-slip differential

THERE'S BEEN A BIT OF a power struggle going on behind the scenes at VW Group, and it has had nothing to do with diesel emissions tests and a defeat device. No, this is the battle for horsepower among the German corporation's hot-hatch collection.

SEAT recently announced that the Leon Cupra will get a 10bhp power hike, to 286bhp (just 10bhp shy of the mighty Golf R). This was almost immediately followed by VW introducing the 261bhp Golf GTI Clubsport. And beforehand, Skoda got in on the act when it declared that its hot hatch and estate – the Octavia vRS – was to be the recipient of a 10bhp increase and an electro-mechanical locking diff. The result is the Octavia vRS 230.

The 10bhp power increase for the 2-litre turbocharged four comes courtesy of an ECU remap and a sports exhaust that includes new front and rear silencers for a reduction in back pressure. The resulting 227bhp arrives 200rpm higher in the rev range than the

standard car's 217bhp, at 4700rpm, and stays until 6200rpm. Torque is unchanged, at 258lb ft, although it's available for longer, from 1500rpm to 4600rpm. The performance gains aren't the biggest: 0-62mph drops a tenth to 6.7sec for the hatchback model with a standard manual gearbox, while the top speed is limited to 155mph (up 1mph). If you opt for the six-speed dual-clutch gearbox, the sprint time is 6.8sec. Either way, the new Octavia is the quickest vRS production model Skoda has ever made.

A single-digit percentage increase in power is neither here nor there, however. What's of real interest is the standard fitment of the limited-slip differential. It's the same unit already featured on the Performance Pack VW Golf GTI and the SEAT Leon Cupra, and when required its electronically controlled clutches can direct up to 100 per cent of the engine's torque to either of the front wheels to quell understeer and improve traction. During the car's presentation to the international press, Skoda's enthusiasm even



went as far as a claim that the car is understeer-free.

A couple of laps of the Slovakia-Ring put paid to that bold notion. The vRS 230 is no trackday hero and, in fairness, Skoda doesn't claim as much, but the track did provide an opportunity to try to trip the car up and plough it straight into the gravel.

Through the faster third- and fourth-gear turns, the Octavia vRS 230 found good grip and strong traction, and with the electronic aids switched off, the front axle was happy to take pretty much all of the throttle we could throw at it as the diff managed the torque distribution to keep wheelspin and push to a minimum.

On return to the UK we had the opportunity to try the vRS 230 on a road (the launch was entirely on track) and it's a similar story, the upgrades adding another layer of polish to an existing **evo** favourite. There's more bite at turn-in, the front end sweeps through the apex in a clean arc and you can get the power down much earlier in the corner. The chassis still isn't as sharp as a Golf GTI's, even one without the optional Performance Pack fitted, neither is it as involving as the Leon Cupra 280's, but it runs Ford's Focus ST very close. Even on the (standard) 19-inch wheels the ride firmness is on the right side of acceptable (adaptive dampers aren't offered).

With the Octavia now the only product earmarked for Skoda's vRS tuning program, it would be good to see the engineers reach deeper still into the VW parts bin (some larger brakes and the full-fat, 286bhp engine would be good), but for now the vRS 230 hits the spot. Hopefully there is even more to come. **X**

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed
In-line 4-cyl, 1984cc, turbocharged	142g/km	227bhp @ 4700-6200rpm	258lb ft @ 1500-4600rpm	6.7sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)

+ Differential increases sharpness, standard equipment **-** Power gain negligible

evo rating	Weight	Basic price
★★★★★	1345kg (171bhp/ton)	£26,350



Audi A4 3.0 TDI quattro

Test location: Venice, Italy GPS: 45.47749, 12.26844

Audi saloons have a rep for superb manners but a less than sparkling driving experience. Does the new A4 break the mould?

BACK IN 1993, THE year before the original A4 was launched, Audi sold fewer than 20,000 cars in the UK. Its market share was just 1.1 per cent. What odds you'd have been offered on Audi becoming the market leader in only two decades – surpassing Mercedes and BMW – we can only guess, but that's exactly what happened.

There are many factors that explain Audi's extraordinary growth, but the catalyst for all of it was the launch of the A4 in 1994. Audi's model line-up is now so mind-bogglingly expansive that the A4 accounts for only around a fifth of the marque's overall sales – compared to almost half just before the turn of the century – but it remains the biggest seller. This latest, fifth-generation version, then, is profoundly important to Audi.

Unsurprisingly, it looks exactly like any modern Audi saloon. In the metal it's handsome and neat, but in no way arresting. The cabin, however, is a real treat, with its minimalist architecture, supreme fit-and-finish

and loving attention to detail in the minor controls and displays. In comparison, the Jaguar XE's cabin feels a generation old.

The seating position is good, too, and the sheer level of kit and technology that's now optionally available is staggering. The aerial camera view when parking and 'traffic jam assist' (which uses the radar cruise control to accelerate and decelerate the car in traffic) are two of the many features that make this the most technologically advanced car in its class.

The previous model's MLB platform has been revised for this application, with a more sophisticated front suspension layout. Weight has been reduced by up to 120kg, with significant improvements made to fuel economy and emissions thanks in part to improved aerodynamics. This A4 has a class-leading drag coefficient of 0.23.

That slippery shape – plus the double-glazed windows – mean the car is a refined motorway companion. With the optional



adjustable dampers in Comfort mode, the ride quality is fluid, too. These are the areas in which the A4 has the 3-series and XE covered.

Off the motorway, though, it falls short of its more dynamic rivals. Audi has sussed the dark art of a relaxed ride quality with taut body control, because this A4 really does maintain its composure when you sling it along a road. It just doesn't excite.

As is so often the case, the standard steering is preferable to the optional Dynamic Steering system. You can actually feel the latter switching between assistance levels and ratios as you arc through a corner, so you find yourself taking two or three stabs at each corner

with the wheel, rather than pouring into them with a single input.

There are two petrol and two diesel engine options from launch, most of which are offered in more than one state of tune to form an extensive range of powertrains. The most potent unit is the 268bhp 3-litre V6 turbodiesel tested here. Aside from the gruff soundtrack, it's impressive, with good throttle response and a broad torque curve. The vast 442lb ft means the higher-powered V6 can only be mated to an eight-speed auto. It lacks the immediacy of the seven-speed twin-clutch S-tronic unit, but for this application it's pretty faultless.

The amount of technology on board the A4 is a direct reflection of Audi's R&D budget. As buyers begin to grow accustomed to this level of luxury, any manufacturer without such a sizeable kitty is at risk of getting left behind. Yet while the new A4 leads this sector in some very important ways, our preference is still for the sharper, more engaging BMW 3-series. ✖

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Specification

+ Leads the way for technology and refinement - 3-series is still the better steer

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
V6, 2967cc, twin-turbo diesel	134g/km	268bhp @ 3250-4250rpm	442lb ft @ 1500-3000rpm	5.3sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	★★★★☆	1660kg (164bhp/ton)	£38,950

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Peugeot 308 GTi 270

Test location: Parc Naturel Régional des Ballons des Vosges, France **GPS:** 48.0656, 7.0691

AFTER MANY YEARS IN the performance-car doldrums, Peugeot is showing signs of returning to its halcyon days of the '80s and '90s. Its performance division, Peugeot Sport, has given us the RCZ R and 208 GTi 30th Anniversary in recent months – respectively our favourite current small sports coupe and one of the best high-performance superminis in recent memory. Now, it has turned its attention to 308.

Available in '250' and '270' guises, the 308 GTi is a direct rival to the VW Golf GTi and Ford Focus ST. It uses a turbocharged 1.6-litre engine – the same four-pot that powers the RCZ R, but with a revised map for a broader torque curve, and with either 247 or 266bhp. Using a smaller engine than its established rivals, the 308 GTi claims to be the most fuel-efficient car in this class, with a combined-cycle figure of 47mpg. Both versions are limited to 155mph and the more potent car will crack 62mph in six seconds flat – two-tenths ahead of its stablemate.

Drive is directed to the front wheels via a six-speed manual gearbox – there's no automatic option – and the quicker version benefits from a Torsen limited-slip differential. The standard tyre on the 250 model is an 18-inch Michelin Pilot Sport 3, but a stickier, 19-inch Pilot Super Sport is available as an option and is standard on the 270. Braking hardware includes 380mm discs with four-piston calipers up front.

The basic 308's strut front suspension and torsion-beam rear end are carried over, but the spring, damper, toe, camber and roll-stiffness settings have all been tweaked. The front anti-roll bar has been wound off a little to improve traction, while the rear beam is stiffer to make the car feel more agile and responsive.

An 11mm drop lends the GTi a more athletic stance, as does the more aggressive styling treatment to the bumpers. Inspired by the 208 GTi 30th Anniversary, the hot 308 can be specified with the 'Coupe Franche' red-and-black paint scheme, albeit reversed (so red at

Has Peugeot Sport managed to sprinkle some 208 GTi 30th Anniversary-style magic on the bigger 308?



the front, black at the back). The heavily bolstered sports seats lend a sporting air to the cabin and the unusually small steering wheel is carried over from the base car.

Despite the front spring rates having been turned up by 60 per cent compared to the GT model and the rears by no less than 100 per cent, the 308 GTi immediately feels less aggressive than the 30th Anniversary. Indeed, the bigger car is billed as a more refined and useable hatch in the manner of a Golf GTi, rather than an RS Mégane rival.

The ride can be a little choppy at low speed, but at higher speeds it really does settle nicely, becoming fluid and pliant. Running less

aggressive camber and caster settings than the 30th Anniversary, the 308 GTi's steering is more relaxed and natural, the driver requiring less time to tune into its rate of response. The front axle finds tremendous turn-in bite and the rear end follows it through faithfully, feeling stable rather than flighty.

The spring and damper rates have been very well judged because the chassis deals with bumps without sending unsettling jolts into the body, but there's also taut control without any unwanted floatiness. The engine feels strong and responsive and the LSD gives excellent traction, but the gearshift action is too long and ponderous to match the best in this class.

The 308 GTi is a very effective hot hatch and represents value, but it doesn't do anything that a Golf GTi can't do in terms of everyday use and neither does it trouble a hot Mégane for thrills. It's a welcome addition to the class, then, but it doesn't achieve the same distinction as Peugeot Sport's previous efforts. ❏

Dan Prosser (@TheDanProsser)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed
In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbocharged	139g/km	266bhp @ 6000rpm	243lb ft @ 1900-5500rpm	6.0sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)

+ A very capable hot hatch... - ...that lacks the sheer excitement of the best in class

evo rating

★★★★★

Weight	Basic price
1205kg (224bhp/ton)	£28,250



Mountune Ford Focus ST

Test location: B1053, Essex **GPS:** 51.929988, 0.505806

Essex tuner reinvigorates Ford's popular hot hatch with a 271bhp upgrade package

FORD'S FIESTA ST IS one of our favourite hot superminis. Light on its toes, punchy in the mid-range, a little feisty at the limit, not only has it won nearly every group test it has entered in **evo**, but it's also dragged the competition up to its standard, notably Peugeot's 208 GTi 30th Anniversary.

When we tried Mountune's tweaked Fiesta ST – and ran an example on the Fast Fleet for a time – our admiration for the car grew stronger still. The beefed-up turbocharged four elevated an already impressive performance envelope, and if the Essex tuner can pull off the same trick with the new Focus ST, we'll have another favourite fast Ford to add to the list.

Mountune's MP275 package will be nothing new to followers of fast-Ford tuning. It's the same upgrade the company offers for the previous Focus ST. Comprising a high-flow alloy intercooler, a free-breathing, low-loss cast crossover duct, a high-flow induction kit and an ECU remap to take advantage of the

improved air-flow and temperature control, the package lifts power to 271bhp (up from 247) at the same 5500rpm and torque to 295lb ft (up from 265), now arriving 750rpm later at 2750rpm. Six tenths are knocked from the standard car's 6.5sec 0-62mph time and in fourth gear the MP275 Focus ST will accelerate from 31 to 62mph in 4.9sec – the standard car takes 5.7sec.

On paper, the MP275 seems to answer a number of the criticisms levelled at the ST when we group-tested it in issue 207, namely a lack of punch from the 2-litre EcoBoost engine to get the best from the Focus chassis. In the standard car, ask for a stronger surge across the mid-range or more fire at the top end and you can be left wanting, over-driving the car for little or no gain. While the Mountune upgrades may amount to only a ten per cent hike in power, the increased torque and the way the revs hang on to the power for longer offer promise.

There are no theatrics on start-up, or indeed when driving normally, and even when you do find yourself in



third gear as you pass an NSL sign, there's a deeper, gruffer sound to the induction but it doesn't dominate (neither is it offensive, as some might expect from a tuner car).

The subtle soundtrack is in contrast to what's happening up front, however. As the revs sweep round the dial, the MP275 finds an extra level of pace missing from the standard car. Shift just before the needle snicks the limiter and you arrive back bang in the middle of the torque and power bands as the ST starts to come alive beneath you. The standard car's flat delivery is gone and the motor has so much more enthusiasm for revs.

It delivers more the harder you

drive it, and because Ford lessened the severity of the torque-vectoring in comparison to the last-gen Focus ST, there is considerably less rampant torque steer. This allows you to get on the throttle earlier and drive out of a corner on a rising wave of mid-range torque. If you're lead-footed and go looking for it, the steering wheel will still wriggle in your hands like an angry cat being snatched up off a sofa, but be moderate and measured and the ST's chassis is responsive as the engine's new spread of power and torque provides the ingredients for a genuine hot-hatch contender.

The MP275 package costs £1195 plus fitting (which takes a couple of hours) and, like all Mountune offerings, doesn't void the standard Ford warranty. You can even have it installed by your Ford dealer.

If you drive a Ford Focus ST, we'd struggle to understand why you wouldn't have this kit fitted. It makes the ST the car it should be straight from the factory. ☒

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Specification

+ Improves performance, enlivens the chassis, warranty-approved **-** Standard rivals still better all-round

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-62mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl, 1999cc, turbocharged	n/a	271bhp @ 5500rpm	295lb ft @ 2750rpm	5.9sec (claimed)	154mph (claimed)	★★★★★	1362kg (202bhp/ton)	£1195 (excl. fitting)



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Vauxhall VXR8 GTS

Test location: A53, Shropshire **GPS:** 52.477868, -1.910560

O OH THE TEMPTATION after the Ashes to make some sort of joke about an Australian car pretending to be English. But then we went and lost the one-day series. And now the Rugby World Cup is in full swing. So I won't.

In fact, the reason why we're trying this particular VXR8 is because it's equipped with an automatic gearbox rather than the manuals we've tried in the past. For context, the manual is a chunky affair, which although not heavy, certainly requires more than a quick flick of the wrist to manoeuvre around the gate. It's a broadsword rather than a throwing knife. As such, it's easy to see why some customers might, in principle, be tempted by this two-pedal option.

The 'box is a six-speed torque converter, which is something of a low-tech solution in this age of lightning-fast seven-speed twin-clutchers and the ubiquitous eight-speed ZF. However, in many ways it suits the VXR8 just fine, as there is a sense that the mighty 6.2-litre

engine has the sort of inertia that doesn't want to be rushed any more than the auto will allow.

Leave this transmission to its own devices and it shuffles up and down smoothly, resisting the temptation to kick down too eagerly. If you want more enthusiasm there are paddles on the back of the steering wheel. These do give you a certain feeling of control, although downshifts are not exactly snappy, so plan ahead. Also, be careful not to run into the limiter, as it's anything but soft.

Nestled between the rev counter and the speedo is a small digital display. As with most cars, you can toggle between various nuggets of information, such as speed, mileage, range, where you're heading and which track from *Neon Ballroom* you're currently listening to. It's perhaps just unfortunate that this screen was left on the fuel consumption page when I got into the car, because it made it clear that pressing the throttle is like pulling the plug out of a bath full of fuel. On a cross-country blast, the only way to keep the number in double figures

Supercharged import gets a torque converter auto (were you really expecting a dual-clutch?) for greater useability



is to discount the decimal point.

As attested by this drinking habit, the VXR8 is a big car, but that only serves to make the way it goes down a road more impressive. The 576bhp supercharged V8 is a brute and you can have the traction light winking furiously in third and sometimes fourth gear on a dry road.

Given this, turning the traction control and ESP off might seem a little like unmuzzling a Doberman that's been snarling at you and hoping that it will politely give you a paw. However, the VXR8 is actually a very friendly beast. Yes it can get a little ragged, rolling and struggling a little over bumps, but the long wheelbase and surprisingly quick

steering make it relatively easy to keep any slides in check. You also always feel like you know where you are with it, and with the auto you can at least have both hands permanently on the chunky wheel.

One of the most surprising aspects of the VXR8 GTS is the way it stops. The pedal is firm and the effect of a decent push is braking of a seriously impressive magnitude. The ability to stand the big saloon on its nose quickly becomes almost as big a weapon as the throttle when you're manhandling the VXR8.

The seats are big and comfy but hold you well. I like the head-up display. There is plenty of room in the back and the boot is pretty enormous. Plus the car sounds like an Aussie batsman that feels he's been unfairly dismissed – lots of grumbling with a bit of whining thrown in for good measure. All in all, the VXR8 GTS is a very likeable, if not necessarily sophisticated (or economical), thing. And that's true whichever gearbox you have. ☒

Henry Catchpole
(@HenryCatchpole)

Specification

+ Quick steering and herculean brakes help the driver manage huge power - Serious drinking habit

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
V8, 6162cc, supercharged	373g/km	576bhp @ 6150rpm	545lb ft @ 3850rpm	4.2sec (claimed)	155mph (limited)	★★★★★	1850kg (316bhp/ton)	£56,234

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MK Sportscars Indy RR

Test location: Blyton Park Circuit
GPS: 53.44965, -0.68558

Hayabusa-engined Seven-alike offers heady thrills, but how does it compare to the more expensive Caterham?



IN 2001 A CATERHAM Fireblade won *evo*'s Trackday Car of the Year award and blew our minds. It felt so light, so manic and so perfectly balanced that the idea of sticking a heavy road-car engine in a Seven chassis suddenly seemed ridiculous. Surely this was the future? Well, not quite. The torque-light delivery, tricky clutch action, harsh vibrations and longevity concerns made it and other bike-engined Sevens less useable as road cars and soon Caterham's officially sanctioned Fireblades went out of production.

However, others have persevered with the formula to great success. This MK Sportscars Indy RR is a track-only, Suzuki Hayabusa-engined machine weighing 480kg with fluids, packing 200bhp and 111lb ft, and driving through a six-speed paddleshift gearbox. It revs to 11,000rpm, too, and costs £26,000 fully built. MK also offers a road-legal Indy R, which will take any number of engines: Zetecs, Duratecs, the F20C engine from the Honda S2000, or, of course, the Hayabusa unit.

MK has been around for 15 years or so (the initials are those of



founder Martin Keenan), growing out of a business supplying parts for the 'Locost' Seven-style kits. Its early cars were Sierra-based kits (for our younger readers, the Sierra was a Ford hatchback – you may know the Cosworth version!), but now it's altogether more serious. Four years ago it commissioned a new CAD-designed tubular chassis with inboard front suspension and rose-jointed double wishbones all round. It produces around 25 Indy R and RRs each year from its factory in Rotherham, plus 25 to 50 kits. Customers can also build their own RR for as little as £15,000.

We're at Blyton Park and helpfully have our long-term Caterham 420R and a Zenos E10 S along for some context. The Indy RR is considerably wider than a standard Caterham (it's more like an SV chassis) so it feels quite big when you get in.

That feeling is magnified because you almost sit on the floor of this particular car. The finish is good but lacks the polish of a Seven's. This particular car is raced in the Magnificent Sevens championship and it has that battle-worn feel. The solid-mounted engine fires up quickly and the whole car shimmies and buzzes to its fast idle.

The Wilwood pedal box is lovely; a real quality item and a great way to feel instantly connected to the car and that engine. However, the brake pedal feels a little low, very lightly weighted and quite long at first. The steering is super-light too, which is a bit of a shock after the hefty feel of the 420R. Part of it must be the lack of weight over the front Yokohama A048s. The way the RR snaps instantly into corners confirms that theory. It is stunningly agile.

The initial laps are about getting to know the drivetrain. The 'box takes flat upshifts no problem and has a throttle blip on the way down, so it's fast and very responsive. That said, it's best to use the clutch on downshifts, which takes a bit of getting used to with a paddleshifter.

The engine itself is fantastic. There isn't a huge amount of torque

but that doesn't matter on the track because you're forever seeking out the 11,000rpm rev limit – the frenzied top-end delivery is just unbelievably exciting. Without a great spike of mid-range torque, you can also get on the power incredibly early out of corners and pretty soon you get into a lovely rhythm with the Indy RR, braking very late, flicking into turns and then almost instantly getting back on the power.

With time, the light steering actually starts to feel really natural and suits the car's nimbleness. The brake pedal might be a little long but the Wilwood four-pots are superbly progressive and you can hold them on the point of lock-up consistently. And although the chassis has a little in-built understeer, it's very easy to tweak and adjust by aggressively turning in on the brakes. Protech dampers adjustable for bump, rebound and ride height allow you to tailor the car to your liking, too.

In short, it's genuinely great fun and the screaming engine makes you almost dizzy with adrenaline. The bike-engined-Seven-style formula remains something to savour. ☒

Jethro Bovingdon
(@JethroBovingdon)

Specification

Engine	CO2	Power	Torque	0-60mph	Top speed	evo rating	Weight	Basic price
In-line 4-cyl. 1340cc	n/a	200bhp @ 10,100rpm	111lb ft @ 8900rpm	3.2sec (claimed)	135mph (claimed)	★★★★★ + Scintillating drivetrain, superb agility - Feels more home-made than a Caterham	480kg (423bhp/ton)	£26,000

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Outside Line

by RICHARD MEADEN



Amidst the final stages of a gruelling house renovation, Meaden can finally focus on what matters most: the garage

IF AN ENGLISHMAN'S HOME IS HIS castle, then what is his garage? I pose this rather esoteric question to you, dear reader, because as I sit indoors attempting to write this column, outside, work has just commenced on the construction of my own garage. It's the final major phase of what Mrs M and I affectionately call 'The Meaden Project': an ongoing adventure in house renovation, caravan living and occasionally perilous finances that has seen us realise a shared dream.

Frustratingly and, I think, wholly unreasonably, the project manager (aka Mrs M) insisted our budget was first allocated to piffling, non-essential items such as walls, plumbing, doors, windows, roof tiles and a kitchen for our tumbledown house. Oh, and project management fees in the form of stabling for her nags. Now, with house and pony-palace built, the garage has finally been given the green light and I'm very excited about it.

I should point out that this is not my challenge to Tony Stark's (Iron) Man Cave, or Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum's planned £20million six-story car park set for construction in Battersea. Then again, perhaps that's just as well given the lengthy deliberations over my own modest construction. Plans evolved slightly when the late decision was taken to earmark one of the three bays for a treadmill, rowing machine and other tools of physical torture. The former me – now referred to with much hilarity by Jethro Bovingdon and Marino Franchitti as 'Fat Dickie' – would never have entertained such nonsense, but a year's sedentary living in a caravan, existing on a diet of beer, BBQ and DVD box-sets (like I said, living the dream) took its toll on my trousers. Consequently a small gym area is an essential weapon in the ongoing war against waistline.

If this early compromise has confirmed anything to me (apart from that living on beer and BBQ is a bad idea), it's the sneaking suspicion that whatever your budget and however grandiose your dream, the ratio of spaces to cars will never be sufficient.

At the time of budgeting and planning, three bays offered ample future-proofing, but at the risk of sounding a teensy bit gauche, that was before an F430 Berlinetta joined the 964 RS and Peugeot 106 Rallye. So not only do I now have insufficient space for three cars thanks to the gym, but I find myself unable to look the little Pug in the headlights due to the guilt of knowing its solitary confinement in our leaky old barn is set to continue.

If Rule 1 of garage building dictates you will never create enough space for all your cars, Rule 2 states you can disprove Rule 1 and construct a truly cavernous garage, but only if you fund

the build by selling the cars you intended to house within it. This is known as the Man-Maths Paradox. And this is just the start. Once you've settled on the size of a garage, resigned yourself to it not being quite big enough, and then acknowledged that you can't really afford to build it *and* keep the cars, you then have to decide how to kit the place out.

This critical 'fluffy' stage is much more my thing. So, while Mrs M talks SIPs and glulams with suppliers and pushes second-fix tradesmen to the brink of tears with her hardball negotiating, I'm agonising over nickel-plated downlighters and door handles, solely on the basis that they will one day match the brightwork on the Porsche 911 beautifully re-imagined by Singer that I'll never be able to afford.

'I'm unable to look the little Pug in the headlights due to the guilt of knowing its solitary confinement in a leaky barn is set to continue'

Flooring is another quandary. Stick with the smooth concrete slab, cover it with large ceramic tiles, or go for the more technical rubber flooring so beloved of top-tier race teams? Walls painted clinical white or a cool, clean grey? Workbench or beer fridge? And then there's the manmorabilia: the racing posters, two decades of (mostly hideous) racing trophies, countless old race suits, retired crash helmets, hundreds of model cars and thousands of magazines. All will be exhumed from packing cases to take their rightful home in the Meaden Man Cave.

As for my original question, I'm afraid I'm no nearer to offering you a definitive answer. Perhaps you can offer me one. What I am confident about is, whether you have a lean-to or a council lock-up, a classic oak-framed cart barn or a billionaire's indulgence, a great garage is not defined by its size, or the value of the cars parked inside. Rather it should be judged by the memories it contains and the adventures it inspires.

Whatever it is that makes yours special to you, I think we can all agree on this: a garage is so much more than just a place to park the car. ✕

✉ @DickieMeaden

Richard is a contributing editor to **evo** and one of the magazine's founding team

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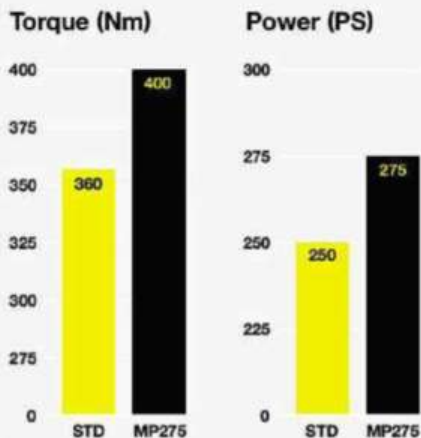
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Petrolhead

by RICHARD PORTER



Porter ponders on the miserable – not to mention dangerous – inclinations of many people we share our roads with

I **IF YOU'VE EVER WONDERED WHERE THE** world's stocks of leathery northern women and retired cab drivers are kept, I can tell you. It's on the Algarve. I know this because I've just come back from this bottom bit of Portugal after seeking out some late summer sunshine to offset a British summer even the Met Office might describe as 'disappointing'.

When we fetched up at Faro airport, the hire-car lottery gave us a Mégane estate, one which claimed to be in 'GT Line' trim and had Renaultsport written on the speedo. Oh dear, I thought, but actually it wasn't bad, especially for a model at the end of its life and, in this case, with nine kilos of sand inserted into every single interior crevice. In the way it drove, you could detect just a whiff of the talents that make proper RenSpo cars such delights. At least I think so. I was on holiday. I had my wife and my baby son in the car. This wasn't the time to start door-handling it on the way to the beach.

Bear this in mind when I tell you what happened on about the fourth or fifth day we were there. We were trundling to the seaside – I'm loathe to say 'pottering' because it sounds like I was wearing slippers, but frankly that's about the speed – when I looked in the mirror and spotted another car approaching at a reasonable lick. It was a Smart, and quite an early one, from when the semi-auto gearchange gaps could be measured in minutes. Even so, this particular example wasn't hanging about, whereas we, being relaxed and on holiday, were. I looked in the mirror again to see the Smart was really close now, and then something extraordinary happened. The person at the wheel flicked on the left indicator and pulled out onto the other side of the carriageway. The road was straight, there was no other traffic and, taking advantage of this, they used their momentum to cruise quickly and cleanly past me and onwards to the things in their day that were more pressing than those in mine. They were in a hurry, I was not, everyone was happy. No harm, no foul.

Compare this with an experience I had in the UK a couple of weeks before. I was driving an MG6, which is a great chassis in search of a better car, and moving briskly down an A-road on a clear and sunny morning. Up ahead was a Focus doing less than the speed limit and very much in the pottering spectrum. I slowed down a good distance behind it, waited until the road straightened out, checked to make sure it was clear, then indicated, banged the MG down a gear, pulled out, and accelerated past. The Focus driver did not like this at all and his first reaction was one of such unhelpful bellendery that I wanted to slap him around the head with one of his slippers: he sped up. I kept my toe in and got past him, cleared a few car lengths then pulled onto the correct side

of the road, at which point Mr Focus moved to phase two of his disgruntlement plan, which was to flash his high beams.

Take a moment to reflect on this duopoly of miserable reactions. First of all, the bitter, mean-spirited attitude that says, 'You think you're coming past, son? Not on my watch. I'm going to speed up and leave you stuck on the wrong side of the road for longer than is necessary.' And then the slow strobing of the headlights, which is the mealy mouthed, bungalow in the 'burbs equivalent of wagging your finger and saying 'tsk'. It says, 'I think what you're doing is dangerous. Even though I just attempted to make it slightly more dangerous.'

I mention this not because it was exceptional, but because it was depressingly close to the norm for any overtaking move

'Most British people see overtaking as lethal and objectionable'

attempted in Britain. Contrast this to the clean, confident way the Smart driver scythed past me in Portugal, which spoke of someone not only in a hurry but also fully expecting no reaction from the person they were passing because they were making a normal and reasonable move in total safety. Or, to put it another way, the Portuguese are good at overtaking and accept it as part of driving life, whereas most people in Britain see it as lethal and objectionable.

All across continental Europe overtaking is seen as practical and acceptable, while in Britain the hoards of dribbling, *Daily Mail*-reading halfwits in their miserymatic diesels regard it a reckless affront as offensive to their tiny, shrivelled minds as bad-mouthing Princess Diana or burning a National Trust tea towel.

I know these people despise progress in all its forms, but when did that attitude become so literal as to resent another driver for wishing to travel on an open, clear road at the national speed limit, rather than 17mph below it (regular and unexpected jabs at the brake pedal permitting)?

It's depressing to see how much Great Britain, once a nation known for its progressive drive and its love of speed, now openly tuts at anyone on the road who shows either, and frankly I've had enough. At this rate, I'll have to move to Portugal. Just as soon as I've become a leathery northern woman. ☒

📧 @sniffpetrol

Richard is **evo's** longest-serving columnist and is the keyboard behind sniffpetrol.com

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Champ

by DARIO FRANCHITTI



A driver admired as much for his ability as his character has been lost. Dario reflects on fellow British IndyCar driver, and friend, Justin Wilson

JUSTIN WILSON WAS A GREAT DRIVER and a great man. He suffered a fatal accident at Pocono Raceway on August 24, colliding with the separated, bouncing nosecone of another car. I'm still struggling to comprehend how unlucky the wretched scenario was. As a freak occurrence it was on a par with the suspension coil that hit Felipe Massa in Hungary. It's the kind of thing that, as a driver, you have to believe will never happen to you.

The obituaries and reflections you may have read in the papers and online relating to his endless warmth, authentic humility, the courage of his convictions? It's all true, every word.

'God help us if somebody ever gives Justin a decent car.' Those were my words, spoken some time ago, and also true. A tragic aspect of Justin's death is that he had finally been given such a car and with it the chance to regularly win IndyCar races and perhaps championships. He was certainly made of the right stuff. The split with Dale Coyne Racing at the end of last season was a big call, and Justin patiently sat in the stands for half of this season – typically for him, without complaint or a shred of resentment, which, trust me, is pretty unusual in this game – waiting for a seat with one of the 'Big Three'. Then, with Andretti Autosport, and at 37, his time came.

It was beyond us all why he hadn't bagged a seat with a top team before, because the calibre of his driving was clear as day. His win in the no. 18 Dallara Honda for the cash-strapped Coyne team – its first in 25 years of racing – at Watkins Glen in 2009 was equivalent of a Manor car storming around Parabolica to take the chequered flag at Monza. I remember thinking from the cockpit of my Target-sponsored car that we would have a chance to pick him off during the pit stops, but no. He was gone. Looking back, this shouldn't have come as a surprise. He was permanently competitive. Genuinely, average machinery wasn't average with Justin at the wheel. He was one of the best upgrades going. In many ways he was the perfect underdog, too; his immensely likeable character fusing with an ability to 'outdrive', as they say, any car.

At six-foot four inches, this Sheffield lad was constantly asked about his height. From day one it was a perceived issue, in so much as everyone talked about the extra weight and the way Justin sometimes struggled to fit into cars. He never saw it as a problem. Just look at his record. In winning the inaugural Formula Palmer Audi championship in 1998 he secured himself a funded Formula 3000 drive the following year. He went on to take the title with a record-breaking points tally in 2001, and by 2003 he was racing for Minardi's Formula 1 outfit before moving to Jaguar – where he did

a damned good job – to partner Mark Webber. Our paths crossed in 2009 when I returned to IndyCar.

Badass. The nickname that played on Justin's benevolent nature was only partly ironic, because despite being just about the nicest guy you could ever meet, when the visor was down he was clinical, unforgiving and bloody quick. Oriol Servià summed it up nicely when he described Justin's almost supernatural ability to sit on the tail of the car in front and defy the aerodynamic disadvantages of the 'dirty' air he was driving through. Once in position, his ability to plot, time and place attacking lunges with the precision of an Olympic fencer made him a lethal overtaker.

You'd see him in your mirrors and sense that the Yorkshireman

'Badass. The nickname that played on Justin's benevolent nature was only partly ironic...'

was going to have a go in the next braking zone. Leave it late, pass, make it stick: few drivers were at Justin's level when it came to overtaking. He was so accurate I'd say you could count the number of incidents Justin caused in his career on one hand. Check out his prowess on lap six of this year's Honda Indy 200 at Mid-Ohio. Two cars, around the outside. Smooth as you like. Makes it look easy. No big deal for Badass.

And he was one of us. He'd just bought an old Porsche. A 911, which I believe he took to a trackday and ragged mercilessly. In one sense that kind of thing was so out of character, because despite being a frighteningly quick racing driver, Justin drove a Honda CR-V and Odyssey minivan for his girls. Yet at the same time, going out and buying an old 911 on the quiet was trademark Wilson. In the same way, this gentle, softly spoken giant was the mischievous instigator of some massive nights out with the IndyCar paddock. There would be a glint in his eye and the next thing you'd know it was Tuesday. He was a true dark horse – one who loved to ride his mountain bike at his home in Colorado and never lost his English accent, his humility, or his daring.

Losing a man of Justin Wilson's stature is a tragedy. His loss will be acutely felt. Motorsport needs to redouble its safety efforts. ✕

✉ @dariofranchitti

Dario is a three-time Indy 500 winner and four-time IndyCar champ

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What's leaked oil on your driveway this month?



Misunderstood

Reading the Talking Point in issue 213, I found myself getting increasingly depressed that neither **evo** nor a large portion of its readership really 'gets' the new MX-5. 'How would you make it a better drivers' car?' you asked after your somewhat downbeat review. 'Bigger wheels', 'more power' came the responses. To this I can only say no, no and no again!

The whole point of the MX-5 has always been that it was a sort of spiritual successor to the likes of the MGB, a car that offers modest power, supple suspension and thrills at lower speeds. Given that **evo** increasingly bemoans the fact that many cars only come alive at three-figure speeds, surely a bit of body roll in the corners and an engine that can be wrung out without losing you your licence is a good thing?

Perhaps you guys spend too much time on the limit in Porsches and McLarens these days to remember what a sports car set up for the road feels like!

Steve Berridge



The Letter of the Month wins a Christopher Ward watch

The writer of this month's star letter receives a Christopher Ward C70 French GP 1906 Chronometer (pictured), worth £599. Its Swiss quartz movement is certified for its accuracy, while the design, which celebrates the first French Grand Prix, includes a recessed plate bearing the winner's name and finishing time (12hr, 14min and 7sec!).

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Great road found

After reading your excellent feature on the Trollstigen and Geiranger (**evo** 213), two fellow Dutch students and I decided to extend our trip to the Atlantic Road with a drive to this incredible part of Norway. Our wheels for the trip would be a €700 fjord-green Volvo 850. Not exactly a match for AMG's GT S, but boy does that five-cylinder warble make up for a lot!

After a drive on the Atlantic Road and having looked at the awesome views this rugged coastline has to offer, we set off for the Trollstigen. There was a definite feeling of anticipation as we got closer to the 'Troll's Ladder', and sure enough we were amazed at the scale of it. Immediately the trusty old Volvo was driven harder, revving out all the way to the red line, the engine's howl reverberating off the high rock faces. Driving past waterfalls and steep drop-offs, this was a motoring experience like no other!

Roeland Grutterink,
Trondheim, Norway

Great road lost

Yesterday I drove the Black Mountain Road in south-west Wales. Today I am in mourning. Another great British driving road has fallen to the nanny state. The nail(s) in the coffin? Eighty brand-new 40mph signs.

This is bad news for those of us who enjoyed driving on this particular road, but it might just be the tip of the iceberg. If more local-council 'heroes' get on the scent we could lose other gems – maybe even some you have visited for your 'Great Drives' series.

Perhaps now to go forward we have to go backwards. Thanks for sharing your favourite locations, **evo**... but is it time to stop?

Ian Payne



Above: Roeland Grutterink followed our tyre tracks on the Troll's Ladder in Norway

GT3 v 675LT v E82

Whilst I enjoyed reading the Porsche 911 GT3 RS versus McLaren 675LT article in **evo** 213, David Vivian's comments such as 'Pretty sure Stu's giving it everything' and mention of 'a plan not to waste a single metre of [the Bala road] on part throttle' suggest a total disregard for statutory speed limits.

Were that not the case, I reckon I would have no difficulty in keeping up with these extraordinary cars in my E82 BMW 1-series and the point of such exotica would be quite lost.

A bit different on the track, of course. Although I would, even at the age of 73, be happy to take them on at the Anglesey Coastal – in the wet.

Excellent magazine. Keep it up.

John Whalley

What's in a name?

Over the years I have written many letters to **evo**. Some were the result of deep thought, some were off the cuff and some were inspired by pure motoring emotion. In your wisdom you have printed 12 of them to date, bestowing the highest honour of Letter of the Month on one humble musing.

I have striven for years to be worthy of space in your publication alongside your esteemed journalists and photographers, but now I realise that all I needed was an exotic name.

Who else knows someone called Jethro? And there is no way I'm falling for a moniker like Aston Parrott. But now, taking things to a whole new level, you have added someone called Hunter Skipworth to your team.

Who knew it was that easy to get a job on **evo**?

Brylcreem Scandi-flick

(Alright, dammit, it's plain old Euan Gibson... again)



Above: how did Hunter Skipworth become our website editor? See 'What's in a name?'



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Talking Point

Performance SUVs

Jaguar recently revealed its F-pace and Bentley its Bentayga, so we asked you what you think about performance SUVs.

I think they're a pointless and silly idea. However, it would seem I'm in a minority if sales are a suitable yardstick to measure by. The silver lining is that the influx of cash allows the manufacturers to continue making more exciting machinery (see Porsche and the Cayenne).

DeskJockey

Every time I see someone driving a new 5-series or E-class wagon I feel like personally congratulating them on not being stupid. I just don't get SUVs.

Evostick

As much as we all complain about big SUVs being a corruption of our beloved manufacturers' values, they are a necessity. Bentley seems very shrewd with the Bentayga. If billionaires are buying Range Rovers that 'only' cost £100k and Mercedes can charge what it feels like for extreme G-classes then the market is clearly there. To ignore that fact is poor business and can only lead to bankruptcy. As long as we still get cars that are what we expect from a sporting brand, what's the problem?

Alan Taylor-Jones

I don't think producing such things spoils the brand at all. Making Ferrari-branded pens, computers, pants and tons of other tat has not harmed my desire for a 458 Speciale A.

davec

I thought that the day a Range Rover hit £100k it had gone too far – but how wrong I was. On that basis the new ugly ducking Bentley should be a massive success!

Brian_the_Snail

The Bentley's styling doesn't really do it for me, but with regards to the segment in general, my opinions have changed. I used to hate the idea of fast SUVs. Then I drove some of them (X6, X5, Cayenne Turbo, Range Rover Sport, Lexus RX). I can now see the appeal. The feeling of mass being overcome by grunt up an incline on a motorway is simply wonderful. The elevated position is very relaxing and I've found that being more removed from the road surface equals better refinement. Driven at reasonable speeds they handle OK, too. In short, I'd have one

ShockDiamonds

The only sports car or luxury car maker that makes or will be making an SUV that I really like is Jaguar with its F-pace. Why? Because Ian Callum and his team took great pains to make sure Jaguar's maiden SUV possesses sporty styling, compact packaging and perhaps sporting performance – befitting Jaguar's athletic brand values.

DdWorks

It's a tad irritating to see so many people get up in arms about this. Porsche did a brilliant job with the Macan and Cayenne, and I'm sure these other brands will follow suit. Personally, I more than welcome variety, and am looking forward to seeing what they're capable of.

Joel Darlington

Wasn't it Ettore Bugatti who said Bentleys were the world's fastest lorries? Nearly 100 years later he might be right!

Helipeek

Join the discussion

Keep an eye on evo.co.uk or follow us on Facebook ([facebook.com/evomagazine](https://www.facebook.com/evomagazine)) to participate in our regular Talking Point debates.

The best comments will be published here each month

From the forums: community.evo.co.uk/forums

Thread of the Month

FatChris

TVR's return

Just read on evo.co.uk that TVR has taken 250 deposits for its new car, meaning the entire 2017 run is spoken for. Is this a triumph of hope over experience?

I too was surprised. But I'd wager that new owner Les Edgar will get it right. Gordon Murray and Cosworth are also some pretty credible names to have on board.

Robby1977

I'm not surprised given they only want a £5k deposit. For some that's pocket change to gamble. And with the big hitters of Murray and Cosworth involved, TVR should get it right.

Scotta

Is Gordon Murray still a big name?

RichardMajor86

TVR and Yamaha have bought into his design and build ethos. I'm guessing he's got a fairly substantial address book to call on also.

Scotta

Good luck to them, I hope the whole thing's a success.

Pete_

Amen to that. Can't wait to see what they come up with.

Robby1977

The misty-eyedness that accompanies memories of the TVR name is very touching. In reality they were essentially good ideas that were nailed together in a shed.

JL

To me the problem is that ten years ago Jaguar only made the Austin Powers XK Coupe. So if you wanted a noisy British sports car you went to TVR and got to know your local AA recovery man by name. Today, Jaguar has the a supercharged 5.0 V8 F-type Coupe with a noisy exhaust...

Sisu

From their press spam TVR aren't targeting the F-type though, are they? All the big manufacturers already have the sports/GT arena flooded with models. If TVR can hit 1100kg (or even within 10 per cent of that) with a V8 they'll be playing to a very different crowd than anything mainstream. But if they can profitably deliver 1100kg, a Cosworth V8 and not have everything else massively compromised for under £100k, I'll be amazed.

RobYob



Thread of the Month wins a Road Angel safety camera & blackspot alert device worth £159.99



The originator of the best **evo** forum thread wins a Road Angel Gem+. The Gem+ automatically updates its camera database as you drive and allows users to share the locations of 'live' camera vans.

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ASTON MARTIN DB10





by JETHRO BOVINGDON

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

REEL TO REAL

*Not only is Aston Martin's DB10 the four-wheeled
star of the new Bond movie – it also offers an
insight into the company's future models.
evo drives one of only ten examples*



T

hose iconic Bond moments are seared into the consciousness of millions. Sean Connery awakening to Pussy Galore, Ursula Andress emerging from the sea, Halle Berry emerging from the sea... Oh, the cars. Yep. Love the cars. And the car chases. That one with the red Mini through Paris. Amazing. Actually, I think that was *Bourne*. What about that incredible sequence with the E34 M5 (3.6-litre, turbine alloys – it's all in the detail) and Peugeot 406? Hang on. Nope, that was *Ronin*. The Mustang? Oh god, that wasn't Bond either.

I'm not sure if anyone from the male species is allowed to say this, but I'm going to anyway: I'm not a massive Bond fan. Oh sure, I'll watch a Bond film on ITV4 if necessary, but I don't know my *Dr No* from my *Octopussy*, my *Quantum of Solace* from my, um, (hold on, let me just Google 'Bond films') *Skyfall*. I do remember Jaws on a

space station, though, and Roger Moore with the Union Jack parachute, so I'm not totally Bond ignorant. And of course, like the rest of the universe, I vividly recall Q flipping up the black Bakelite gearknob of that DB5 and telling 007 never to touch the red button within.

Despite my patchy knowledge, the idea of driving a Bond car remains something to prize. Especially if it isn't a Z3. That really happened, didn't it? Anyway, the Aston Martin DB10 is a proper Bond car: beautiful, bespoke and rippling with an elegant aggression. Just ten were built for the filming of *Spectre* and today we'll be driving one on Millbrook Proving Ground's Hill Route. Despite this car being expected at the film premiere around a month from now, the only restriction imposed upon us is that we don't fly it off the infamous Millbrook yump. A kind man from Aston Martin even



Left: clamshell bonnet features a shark-inspired nose; exterior bodywork was designed by Aston's Sam Holgate. **Below right:** analogue dials are a nod to Bond's first Aston, the DB5



peels back the passenger footwell carpet to show us where the traction-control button is located...

Under that carpet and beneath the clean, shimmering carbonfibre lines isn't a new DB11 (the DB9 replacement) or the next-generation V8 Vantage chassis fitted with the new AMG-sourced twin-turbocharged V8 engine. The DB10 is instead based on a V8 Vantage S with that razor-sharp 4.7-litre V8 engine, a six-speed manual gearbox and fixed-rate dampers. Yep, a six-speed manual, as requested by director Sam Mendes, who wanted to create a tangible link with the original, Silver Birch DB5 in *Goldfinger* that consummated the Bond/Aston Martin marriage, now celebrating its 50th anniversary. For a car that signals so much about Aston Martin's future, the underpinnings are resolutely old-school. The car isn't pure V8 Vantage, however, as it runs a 70mm longer wheelbase and a wider track to





make sense of the broad shoulders. The DB10 is nearly as wide as a One-77.

The tantalising prospect of driving an AMG-powered Aston Martin will have to wait, then. However, the DB10 is still an important car in so many respects. It showcases some of the design language that we will see on the next V8 Vantage, it marks a new philosophy where the GT line (the DB11 we'll see at the Geneva motor show next year) and the pure sports cars will have two very distinct aesthetics, and the interior is loaded with ideas, shapes and textures that will feature on the next generation of cars. Lastly, the DB10's conception and creation demonstrates the skills of the new 'Q Advanced Engineering' division.

The DB10 was designed and built in just five months by Q Advanced. Essentially you can approach Aston Martin and then work in conjunction with Q Advanced to create a completely bespoke vision. Ferrari already does

this, of course – just think the 512 BB-inspired, 458-based SP12 EC created for Eric Clapton. Now imagine your own fantasy Aston Martin, find a few quid (or maybe a couple of million) and Q Advanced Engineering will make your dreams come true...

As adverts go – and quite aside from the millions who'll see it on screens around the world until the end of time – the DB10 is stunning. It looks tight and ultra-compact, the surfaces are liquid-smooth but have a sharp tension, and the exaggerated, pinched hips and fulsome rear wheelarches are almost indecent. The decision to use large carbonfibre sections to reduce the number of shutlines really is effective, the car taking on an almost organic, shark-like form. Sorry – you can see what it looks like for yourself, of course. But the effect of being around the DB10, and in particular being around a new shape that is unmistakably Aston yet also very definitely not DB9-inspired,

is genuinely exciting. When the lightweight door swings open it gets even better.

The sills, door trims and transmission tunnel are in a new satin-lacquered carbonfibre that's cool to the touch and reveals a subtle, understated glimpse of the herringbone pattern. Black leather with contrast stitching adds texture and a little luxury, but the overall impression is pared-back, almost minimalist. Even better is the view when you drop into the driver's seat. Ahead is a large central speedo reading up to 220mph; set within is a smaller circular cluster of three chronograph-style gauges for oil and water temperature and the fuel level. Set either side and mounted high up are two smaller dials. The left one is a rev-counter and the right, tantalisingly, a boost gauge, reading up to 30 psi (2bar). I love the analogue style of this stuff and I'm certain it'll be carried over, in theme at least, to the DB11 and the next sports car, too.



Right and below: senior Aston designer Steve Platt was responsible for the interior, which borrows cues from the Vulcan track car and features several delta-wing motifs



The steering wheel has three thick carbon spokes, a hexagonal boss similar to that of the Vulcan track car and the most gorgeous slivers of aluminium for various control functions. None of them actually move, but the jewel-like delta-wing-shaped menu buttons are ridiculously evocative, and although the wheel has loads of functionality – from Launch Control to Sport mode, damper adjustment (non-functional in this car) and even a thumb-recognition starter (hope this makes production!) – it doesn't feel cluttered. Of course, the Alcantara-and-leather rim isn't actually round but it feels great: thick but not overly so and with the perfect amount of squish. For what is effectively a rolling concept, the attention to detail is fantastic.

Starting the DB10 involves leaning over into the passenger footwell, grabbing a big black control box that's attached to a wiring loom, pulling up a red power switch, and flicking one ignition toggle and then another to trigger the starter motor. As ever, the Aston

V8 sounds mighty, a lovely mix of V8 bass and motorsport blare. The gearlever looks more like an automatic selector – a wide oblong with an enamel Aston badge. On its 'stick' section there's another delta-wing switch (pointing down this time) that would rock left to disengage traction control, right to engage radar cruise control and downwards to select reverse. If it moved at all. Here it's just for effect.

Millbrook's Hill Route is a hell of a workout for any car. If you don't know the lie of the land, its combination of blind curves, odd cambers and monster compressions is terrifying, but once you start to learn whether it's about to turn left or right, it's just brilliant. Still mildly terrifying, but so bloody exciting you want to circulate it over and over again. I love it, but I'm not sure that the DB10 will share my positivity. This place is any prototype or concept car's worst nightmare. Even a fully sorted production car will often graze its front splitter, smack into its bumpstops or just wobble and wilt under the

*'Crest the wave
of top-end
power and
the DB10 feels
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and genuinely
poised'*





***‘It has a
real sense of
authenticity.
Everything
it does feels
natural and
intuitive’***

Above: diamond-turned wheels feature a knife-blade theme in the spokes (it's mirrored in the rear lights). **Top right:** bonnet is perforated rather than vented

stress of the direction changes at maximum attack on this course, so my expectations for the DB10 are lower than the profile of its 20-inch rear tyres.

Sure enough, it immediately feels a little rough around the edges. Aston Martin has its own hospitality unit at Millbrook and driving away from it you have to traverse a steep gravel ramp and then a long stretch of nasty concrete surface before arriving at the foot of the Hill Route. The suspension clatters, the rear axle seems a bit clonky and the whole car is alight with noise and vibration. There's no sound-deadening to speak of, no airbags, and the floor carpet sits on the bare aluminium structure, so there's a sense of rawness about the DB10. I think that's forgivable and a lower kerb weight than the Vantage S (1542kg versus 1610kg) is a useful benefit, too.

Things smooth out with speed and the DB10 starts to confound my expectations. Sure, there's the odd *skrrrrrrssschh* as wheels kiss wheelarch liners and I wince with every big compression, but for the most part it feels superb. The drivetrain really needs revs

and the steep gradients here expose a lack of torque, but the flipside is superb traction and the encouragement to crest the wave of top-end power. Do so and the DB10 feels fast, alert and genuinely poised. If anything, it feels a shade too composed – the longer wheelbase and wider track giving a huge amount of grip and dialling out some of the V8 Vantage's adjustability. Or more accurately, pushing the limits out to such an extent that the adjustability is harder to access and that zone where grip and slip meld is less fuzzy and tolerant, more sharply defined.

Pretty quickly I realise that whilst the exterior and interior styling of the DB10 is a glimpse at what the future holds for Aston Martin, the driving dynamics are a reminder of what must not be lost as it rushes headlong into an exciting new era. I might not find the gearshifter very pleasing to hold but the very act of changing gear manually is fantastically rewarding. The steering – hydraulically assisted – writhes with feedback, the carbon-ceramic brakes are also perfectly judged, and the car has a real sense of authenticity. Everything it does feels natural,



intuitive, and that's because your hands and senses know what's coming with forensic detail. You are at the centre of the experience, hardwired in and working in unison with every element of the chassis and drivetrain.

In truth, cars such as the Porsche 911 and AMG GT S outperform this car, and the V8 Vantage S to which it owes so much, pretty easily: more power, more torque, more grip, faster gearshifts. In every measurable sense they're operating at a higher level. They will be the new target. It's inevitable that the new breed of Aston Martins will become faster and more capable, but retaining their unique character will be the real challenge. How does the attacking driving style that so suits this car live on when you're running with an extra 100lb ft or more going to the rear wheels and at 1500rpm rather than 5000rpm? How do you get the same sense of intense involvement without a manual lever to operate? The DB10 says to me that the next Astons will look effortlessly stylish, maybe more exciting and aggressive, and there's no question that they'll feel genuinely special in every detail. But

for us the magic is in the dynamics as well as the aesthetics. We must wait and hope that numbers and lap times aren't put ahead of the simple joy of driving.

Such are the demands of photography that the DB10 gets little rest all day. It's never unravelled by the Hill Route, although certain sections require caution so as not to rub the tyres on the 'arches too severely. The only technical issues are that we run out of fuel at one point (that lovely chronograph gauge doesn't actually work) and that it gets bloody hot inside (fixed windows and no ventilation). I'm not sure it makes me feel as cool and deadly as James Bond, but it's a joy to get to drive it so extensively and relatively hard. Going sideways in a precious carbonfibre Aston can definitely be described as 'a very good day out'.

There's another DB10 that I really want to drive, though. I enjoyed the shiny, perfectly finished 'hero car', but the stunt version has a roll-cage and a hydraulic handbrake. Screw the weight penalty, I'll take it. Even if the price means sitting through endless Bond films and paying attention. ☒

ASTON MARTIN DB10

Engine V8, 4735cc

Power 430bhp @ 7300rpm (est)

Torque 361lb ft @ 5000rpm (est)

Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Weight 1542kg

Power-to-weight 283bhp/ton

0-60mph 4.7sec (est)

Top speed 190mph (est)



Being **B O N D**

*You've seen the DB10, now meet the man who brings it to
life in Spectre. The name's Higgins, Mark Higgins...*

by HUNTER SKIPWORTH

MARK HIGGINS IS A MAN WHO MIGHT just be more Bond than Bond himself. Daniel Craig definitely has the swagger, but when it comes down to it, Higgins does the dirty work.

Fresh from blasting Aston Martin DB10s through the Vatican City, Higgins is sitting opposite me sporting the ultimate Bond outfit. Tom Ford suit across his back, Omega watch on his wrist, he certainly looks the part. Then I lean back and spot a pair of Alpinestars on his feet. I know this is going to be an interesting chat.

Has he ever managed to scare Daniel Craig? 'No, not really,' says Higgins. 'He's James Bond. How could I scare James Bond?' OK, scrap that. Has he ever managed to scare himself? 'Yes,' he answers, 'always.'

Unsurprising really when you take a look at Higgins' driving history. A rally driver for 25 years, he has dabbled in stunt work in recent times, finally finding his place as Bond following the quarry chase scene in *Quantum of Solace*.

Tonight, Higgins will be driving along the banks of the river Tiber in Rome in one of the DB10s created for *Spectre* – while squirting flames out the back of the car at a Jaguar C-X75 giving chase. Just another day at the office, then.

The *Spectre* set is quite unlike anything we have ever seen before. A fleet of DB10s and C-X75s are being prepped, while a team of divers bob up and down in the river. A camera helicopter hovers above.

'We've been on this now for three months,' says Higgins. 'We did rehearsals back in December and the main Rome car chase started three weeks ago. This week we've had a wall ride, we've been jumping down steps, drifting around the streets and gone through the Vatican at over 100mph, which is pretty awesome. I don't think anybody has ever done that before and I don't think it'll ever be done again.'

The streets of Rome brought their own unique challenge, as Higgins explains. 'It's been very difficult here because we couldn't practice on cobbled roads anywhere else. There's just nowhere to simulate these kinds of roads. We can practice at Millbrook and Mira in the UK, but until you actually get here it's a very different thing altogether and for the most part we've never even seen the road properly until it's closed off.'

Higgins' WRC history makes itself apparent when I ask him to describe exactly how the Vatican sequence took place. Rome simply appears to be a rally stage to him as he reels off an explanation as if it were a set of pace notes. 'We probably went through there ten times,' he says. 'You've got the lead up



a straight road followed by a nice square left and a long right-hander. Because of the cobbles outside the Vatican, the car reacts very differently and as it's getting later in the evening, the moisture in the air starts [to take effect] as well, so it becomes quite slippery. Often we're jumping from one car to another, so just getting a bit of heat into the tyres makes for a massive difference.

'For us it was amazing because everything was locked off. We were probably going through the square at 100mph sideways, which was quite nice. We were told: "Whatever you do, just don't hit the Vatican."'

The driving sequences in *Spectre* required a set of very special DB10s and C-X75s to be produced. Eight in total made their way to Rome, ranging from cars specifically set up for jumps and drifting, to the clever 'pod cars'. These represent a particular challenge to Higgins. Built so actors can do their dialogue while driving, they have a cage on the roof that the stunt driver straps himself into and controls the vehicle from.

'The pod is very difficult,' says Higgins. 'The problem is you haven't got direct steering feel – instead it's done through hydraulic powerboat systems, so it never centralises. You're always correcting it. It's not like driving a car at all. We much prefer driving the real cars.'

'You get used to it but obviously your centre of gravity is very high, so you feel like you're going to roll over. It's not until you've actually

chucked it around a few times that you get confident in it. It's very, very different up there.'

He might claim he scares himself all the time, but chatting with Higgins is enough to convince you that really he is a man with no fear. Example? 'I'd love to drive a Formula 1 car upside down,' he says. 'I think that's got to be done one day. I found a tunnel when we were in Austria shooting for *Spectre*. It's got a flat top and if you got the transition right I'm pretty sure that could happen.'

But going back to his current job, just how Bond is Higgins? He might have the suit and he most definitely can do the driving, but does he have the gadgets? I ask him who sets off the DB10's flamethrower and instantly realise he has fulfilled every Bond fan's dream.

'I've got a few buttons to press,' he says with a grin. 'And, yes, it's me who activates the flamethrower.' Not only does he get to drive the Aston, but he plays with the gadgets as well...

Later that night we witness Higgins in action as a DB10 and C-X75 scream their way down the edge of the Tiber, their howling V8s ringing between its stone-clad banks. There's a brief moment, while the 300-strong set falls silent and the cameras roll, that both cars appear to be chasing each other for real. For that moment and that moment alone, Mark Higgins is 007. ✕



Above: ML65 camera car (impressive in itself) chases DB10. **Left:** pod atop C-X75. **Below:** racing through Rome, near the Vatican City

'We were probably going through the Vatican City at 100mph sideways, which was quite nice'



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RE-IMAGINED
ICONS

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/ 3

by RICHARD MEADEN
PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

Old friend, new tune

They're classic models, but overhauled, upgraded or even built afresh today. We sample three reborn icons, starting with this Porsche 911 re-imagined by Singer





IF THERE'S A POSTER CAR

for the retro-modernist automobile movement, this is surely it. By no means the first to combine classic 911 looks with modern 911 performance, the exquisite creations of Rob Dickinson and his dedicated team at Singer Vehicle Design are by common consent the most complete and the most covetable. Truly, madly, deeply wonderful machines, they shine with a level of quality and fanatical detailing that's so close to perfect you feel slightly giddy just looking at a photograph of one.

If you're a fan of classic 911s the idea of messing with Stuttgart's mojo instinctively feels like something akin to heresy, yet the empathy with which the California-based company approaches the task of reinventing 964-generation Porsche 911s is absolute. These guys revere Porsche's legacy and have steeped themselves in the kind of geeky knowledge that enables them to take inspiration from all the great 911s of the past but never directly copy any of them. They would certainly never seek to pass off Porsche's work as their own, but for the record – and the appeasement of lawyers – the correct way to refer to this car is as a 'Porsche 911 re-imagined by Singer Vehicle Design'. So now you know.

The results, as I'm sure you're all aware, are breathtaking. The exacting nature of Singer's restoration and re-imagining of Porsche's 911 is legend, so I won't revisit the process in detail, but suffice it to say, once a 964 enters the Sun Valley workshop it undergoes a transformation process that sees it lavished with thousands of hours of labour and fitted with the finest componentry available – a mix of bespoke and original Porsche parts – before emerging around eight months later as one of the world's most desirable cars.

As you can no doubt imagine, every car is built to a very personal specification, as befits



Right: bespoke carbon bodywork infuses the 964 shape with an irresistibly classic vibe. The doors can also be had in carbon, but only if a roll-cage is fitted

**'Each car is
lavished with
thousands of
hours of labour
and fitted
with the finest
componentry'**

the totally bespoke nature of the commissioning process. Understandably, customers don't tend to hold back, so whilst there are a number of engine, transmission and suspension options, people tend to go for the ultimate version. Well you would, wouldn't you?

If there was ever a question mark over Singer's business plan, it was whether there were enough people in the world prepared to spend upwards of £300,000 on a revamped 964 911. Five years on – in which time Dickinson and crew have worked tirelessly with total commitment to the cause – any doubts have been replaced by a burgeoning order book. Annual production now sits at 25 cars. Forty have already been delivered and if you order one now you can expect to get it in two years. It's a phenomenal and apparently exponential





Above: Meaden says his own 964 RS would be left in this car's beautifully wrought wake. **Below left:** Cosworth 'six'



success story, and one that has plenty more chapters to come if my sadly-off-the-record chat with Dickinson is anything to go by.

This particular car was the first Singer-modified 911 to come to the UK. If you were at this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed there's every chance you will have seen and heard it in action, or at the very least left your greasy noseprint on the driver's window. It speaks volumes that even at the year's finest gathering of historic and contemporary cars, this and Singer's first reborn Targa pulled people in like magnets. It was while at Goodwood that we nabbed Dickinson and begged him for a chance to drive this car on proper UK roads. He in turn begged the extremely accommodating customer and plans were duly hatched for something I've longed for since first experiencing Singer's work on US soil back in 2012 (*evo* 176).

Since then, not only has Singer's order book expanded, but so has its team, which now extends to the UK. Sales are handled by supercar specialist Simon Furlonger, while everything else, from sourcing suitable 964s for prospective customers to servicing (and transporting cars to remote Welsh photo locations) is taken care of by Greg Cranmer of Heritage Auto Werks. Together they make a good team and further authenticate the seriousness of Singer's operation and ambition.

It's hard to describe how it feels to watch and listen as this car starts and is gently disgorged from its covered trailer. I've never seen an exotic butterfly emerging from a chrysalis, but as this 911 sits in the late summer sunshine, light glinting from its nickel-plated brightwork, air-cooled motor cackling busily at a fast idle while serpentine vapours curl into the air from its

'Singer preserves everything about a classic 911 that you want to keep'



sawn-off exhaust pipes, it's impossible not to stand mesmerised at the sight before you.

Regain your mental faculties and a multitude of things strike you. First is just how small the 964 is compared to today's 991, even when wearing Singer's generous carbonfibre curves. Then there's the purity of that shape and the millimetric precision of the stance. Step closer and your eyes dart from detail to detail, then your hand reaches out to grasp the driver's door handle (again, nickel-plated), at which point the whole process begins again as you get behind the wheel and drink it all in.

Few cars in my experience combine opulence and honesty so effortlessly. The woven leatherwork is beautiful, the brass collets in the vented seats a perfect nod to competition cars of the past, as is the lovely Momo Prototipo steering wheel – one of the few things Singer

is happy to buy off-the-shelf. Oh, and then fit with its own billet-machined nickel horn-push. All these lovely materials are offset by the areas of exposed paintwork, in this case a glorious shade of orange christened 'Yolk'. It is so rich and glossy, you feel like you could dip a soldier of toast into it.

So here you are, sat in this fabulous, ferociously valuable, privately owned and totally bespoke car. You should feel intimidated, almost too scared to start the thing and drive it away for fear of putting a mark on it, but as soon as you twist the key you feel completely at ease. And that's the great joy of this car – it preserves everything about a Porsche 911 you want to keep. That intimacy and dedication to function, the ease of use and fuss-free operation that makes driving it feel like second nature.

Of course, there are the 911 quirks long since lost in the mists of time and evolution. Things such as the offset driving position combined with floor-hinged pedals that work shin muscles you'd forgotten existed. But there's something – everything, actually – that feels so natural about this car that it's like putting on a tailored jacket that fits so well you barely know you've got it on.

Rare is the car that looks this good and delivers a driving experience to match, but no sooner have you slotted first gear – noting the smoothness and perfect weighting of the Singer-fettled shift – brought the revs up a little, fed in the clutch and pulled away that you know this is a machine built by car obsessives for car obsessives. This car features Singer's 3.8-litre flat-six. Developed by Cosworth, all Singer's engines – that's to say the 3.6, 3.8 and



This page: attention to detail is astonishing – original trim blends seamlessly with the Singer-added items. While the shell is from a 964, the interior evokes the spirit of the '70s (only with electric seats). The steering wheel is the same used in Porsche's 917 racer



‘It howls to its limiter with an urgency
unlike any large-capacity flat-six that’s
ever sat in a 911 road car’





**‘It’s impossible
to tell where
the original car
ends and Singer’s
contribution
begins’**

the recently introduced 4.0 – are built by Ed Pink Racing Engines in California.

Good for 360bhp and 282lb ft, the 3.8 is sensational. In fact there are times you have to remind yourself this is an air-cooled flat-six, such is its smoothness, response and appetite for revs. Don’t worry, it still has that uniquely gruff, respiratory note, but the way it sings (no pun intended) through its rev range is majestic and completely intoxicating. Mated to a six-speed gearbox, this makes for a car with intense performance. There’s an absolute wall of torque through the mid-range, yet the more you pour on the revs, the sharper and more intense the engine feels. You might not trouble

the final few increments of Singer’s famous 11,000rpm tacho, but this thing howls to its limiter with an urgency quite unlike any large-capacity air-cooled flat-six that’s ever sat in the tail of a 911 road car. It’s like a race engine without the hissy fits.

It’s worth noting that, since its introduction, most of Singer’s orders have been upscaled to the new 4.0 motor. Someone has even ordered one to replace his 3.8. Mighty though the 3.8 is, the prospect of the 390bhp and 315lb ft engine, complete with custom crankshaft, Carrillo conrods, Mahle barrels and pistons, Jenvey individual throttle bodies, and cylinder heads by Extreme Engineering is mouth-watering.



PORSCHE 911 RE-IMAGINED BY SINGER

Engine Flat-six, 3800cc

Power 360bhp @ n/a

Torque 282lb ft @ n/a

Transmission Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Swing arms, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Ventilated and drilled discs, 322mm front, 299mm rear

Wheels 9 x 17in front, 11 x 17in rear

Tyres 225/45 R17 front, 275/40 R17 rear

Weight 1200kg

Power-to-weight 305bhp/ton

0-60mph 3.6sec (estimated)

Top speed 180mph (estimated)

Basic price c£300,000

evo rating: ★★★★★

would have done had it spent the last 25 years perfecting the air-cooled car.

Some people don't 'get' what Singer does. That's understandable when the asking price for the finished article is so much more than the value of the car it's based upon. Yet when you spend time with the car – quality time where you can pore over it and then go and drive it properly – you're genuinely left wondering how they can do it for the money. And, if you're anything like me, left wishing for the lottery win that would see one in your garage.

It's no coincidence that the rise of the retro-modern car comes at a time when modern high-performance cars have never been faster or easier to drive yet offer a level of performance that's almost completely unusable on public roads. When your role as driver has been reduced to that of an awestruck bit player, is it any wonder we've started to crave the deeper satisfaction of a car that includes you in every mile of every journey at sane speeds?

Genuine classics offer some solace, but they come with compromises of their own. Not least the fact that in becoming appreciating assets reliant on low mileage and originality, many owners are afraid or reluctant to use them. What Singer does with the Porsche 911 gives those with the means and imagination a way of sidestepping that trap with a car that combines the best of classic and modern to deliver something with timeless qualities and limitless appeal. It's a fabulous recipe. Once tasted, nothing else will do. ☒

Running on Öhlins suspension, custom tuned by the Swedish firm to specific Singer valving, this UK car is built to optimum road specification. It feels sublime, riding bumps and crests with serene pliancy, yet responding to steering – and throttle – inputs with clarity and immediacy.

You can feel some old-school 911 traits come into play, such as the obvious rearward weight bias and the occasional tendency to nod its head, but that's the point of this car: the performance of a later GT3 (the first 4.0 Singer was timed at 3.3sec to 60mph), the character and connection of the earlier cars and some newfound control and compliance that's

beyond any 911 you have ever experienced.

The weird thing about this car is that, much like the looks, it's impossible to tell where the original car ends and Singer's contribution begins. The feel and behaviour could only be that of a 911, the soundtrack, too. Yet the finesse and fine detail of its feedback and the fluidity of its progress across testing British roads and terrain is something else altogether. I love my 964 RS dearly, but it doesn't have anything close to the delicacy of this car. In fact it wouldn't know which way this car went.

All of which reinforces the sense that what Singer has done to the 964's dynamics and performance is what you'd hope Porsche



RE-IMAGINED
ICONS

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/ 3

History repeating

by JETHRO BOVINGDON

*FIA approved and built by Jaguar
itself, just six of these 'new',
£1million-plus Lightweight E-types
will be built. Do they capture the
magic of the 12 originals?*



Perfection. A concept at the heart of many reborn classics. An obsession with every detail, a fierce desire to create something authentic, to honour the tradition and legacy of what's gone before. But striving for perfection brings risk. The best cars aren't necessarily 'perfect' in a conventional sense, and the best old cars are certainly a very, very long way from flawless in so many ways. Yet imposing modern tolerances and cutting-edge modelling and material technology threatens to change the overall experience to such an extent that maybe the magic formula will be lost forever, the new creation an aesthetic masterpiece but a shadow of the gnarly, imperfect, quirky and awkward original as an overall experience.

The new Lightweight E-type built by Jaguar Heritage, an arm of the sprawling JLR Special Operations division that also includes SVO, tests that theory to the nth degree. The concept behind it has a gorgeous simplicity and a poetic charm, but when you see the breathtaking execution you can't help but wonder if the authentic feel and spirit of the original could possibly survive.

The story of the Lightweight itself is delightfully imperfect and, until now, unfinished. Back in February 1963 work began on the 'Special GT E-type' to take on the might of Ferrari in international endurance racing. The standard car's steel monocoque and panels were replaced with handmade aluminium alternatives, spot-welded and riveted together. The result saved 114kg. The engine was a dry-sumped 3.8-litre XK straight-six with a new aluminium block and wide-angle cylinder heads. Good for around 300bhp, it also saved more vital kilos. Jaguar homologated the engine in two specs, the first running three 45DCO3 Weber carbs, the other using Lucas mechanical fuel injection.

The intention was to build 18 examples, but just 12 were produced in '63 and '64 and delivered to privateer racers. Six chassis numbers assigned to the Lightweight project were left dormant and remained blank in Jaguar's own production ledgers. Now Jaguar Heritage has revived the Lightweight and will build those six missing cars. Each has already sold for well over £1million. The passion bursting forth from the team charged with finishing the Lightweight story is plain to see and the attention to detail in the build process has a joyous human touch at its very centre, despite help from some very modern technology.

We'll get to the hand-built stuff in a moment, but first let's consider the technology used to arrive at an authentic specification from a time when blueprints and technical drawings are scarce to say the least. All the documents that had survived were of course studied and logged, but the car really started to come together when one side of the final original Lightweight was digitally scanned, each internal and external surface measured and every rivet mapped to get a perfect 3D rendering. That image was then flipped to create a completely symmetrical shape and structure. Chassis 12 was chosen because it's about the

most original in the world and also featured various strengthening improvements learnt along the way during the first production run.

As race cars, many Lightweights have been modified further over the years, so the 'new' cars are arguably more authentic than one you might see racing at Goodwood or the Silverstone Classic. Perhaps most importantly though, Jaguar decided not to improve the riveting techniques and spot-welding patterns, nor to employ modern high-strength materials in key parts of the structure. Everything is as it was in '63 in that regard. This new batch of Lightweights might be the most precisely proportioned E-types ever, but they remain Lightweights, warts and all, in terms of rigidity and chassis behaviour.

Production itself is handled between three sites. The monocoque is created in Jaguar's Whitley technical centre in Coventry, the rolling shells are painted at Gaydon, then the final trimming and the marrying of the drivetrain to the car takes place at Browns Lane back

in Coventry, yards from where the originals would have been thrown together. Well, maybe not 'thrown together' but certainly the quality of finish and the level of precision in 2015 is of a whole different order. The result? Simply jaw-droppingly, head-swimmingly, heart-thumpingly beautiful in every way. Sitting in the pitlane of the Navarra racetrack in radiant Spanish sunshine it looks tiny, delicate, taut, sculptural and deliciously exciting. Those 15-inch wheels, 7 inches wide at the front and 8 at the rear, give an unmistakable stance that turns the awkward, narrow-track E-type into something so much fiercer. Still organic but with palpable menace. It almost looks too good to drive.

However, Jaguar Heritage hopes that these new cars will be raced hard and each has full FIA papers for historic racing. It's homologated at 960kg dry and a little over a tonne with fluids on board. The engine – supplied by historic race car restoration experts Crosthwaite and Gardiner – runs a compression ratio of 10:1 and produces around 340bhp. Car One, this car, is fitted with the fuel injection system and I'm warned that the throttle is basically on or off. The Lightweight runs on Koni dampers built to a very similar specification to those from '63 and retains double wishbones at the front with torsion bar springs and independent wide-based wishbones at the rear (where the driveshaft serves as the upper link) with two coil springs each side. I can't quite believe that the owner of this thing is willing to let a few journalists in for several laps of this tight, technical circuit (understandably we don't have access to the full majesty of Navarra's faster sections), nor that I'll much enjoy driving a car worth well into seven figures with a throttle pedal that acts like a switch.

Of course, the driving is only half the story with a box-fresh Lightweight. To just walk up to it, pop open the tiny door, notice the wide bare-aluminium sill is covered in protective film, then drop backwards into the slim red leather seat is a massive thrill. The thin-rimmed wooden steering wheel is huge, the bare transmission tunnel hot to the touch and the lever for the four-speed all-synchromesh 'box perfectly positioned. What a view! To say it's evocative to grasp that beautiful wheel, take in the big Smiths dials – the right-hand

'The Lightweight is simply jaw-droppingly, head-swimmingly, heart-thumpingly beautiful in every way'

Top right: body comprises 230 separate components, all of them reproduced in similar grades of aluminium to the original parts. **Right:** engine uses an aluminium development of the D-type's cast-iron block



‘You’re so much busier, so much more focused on getting each element to come together’

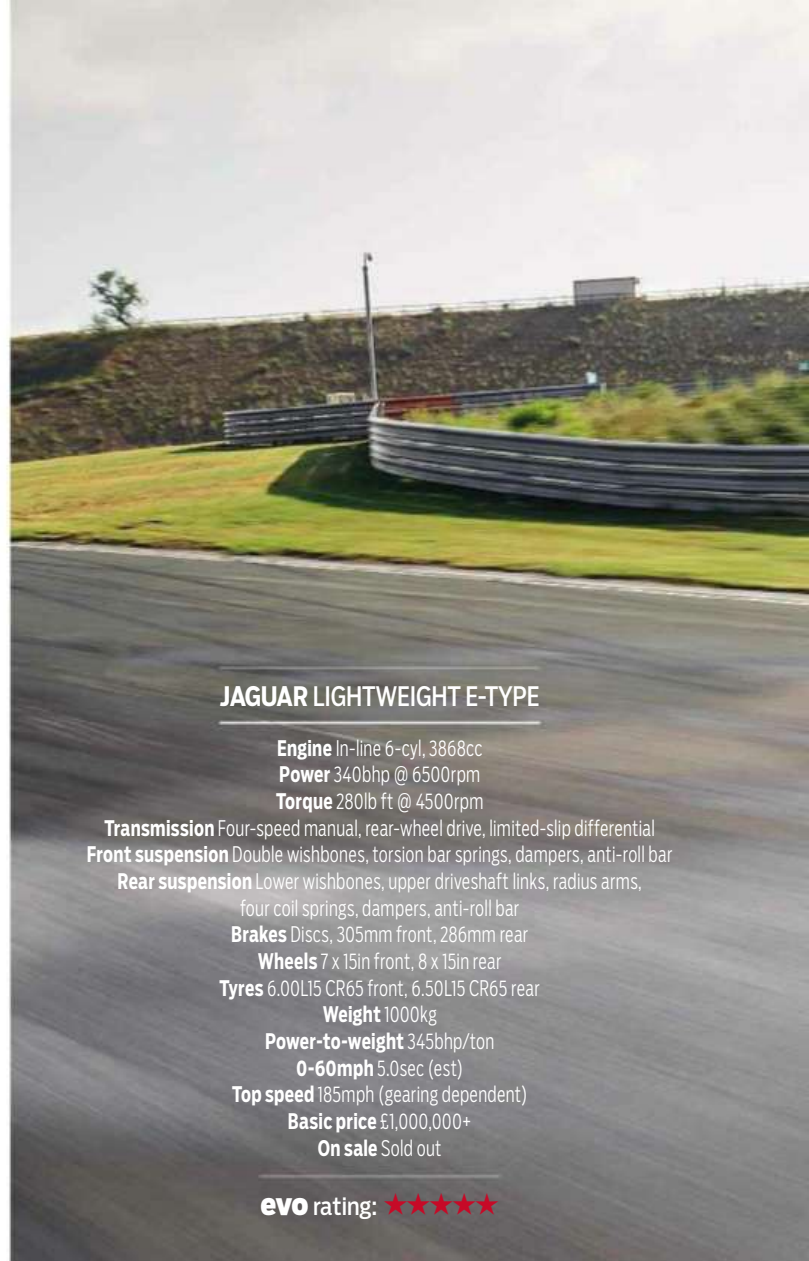
one reading to 160mph, the left marked in tens to ‘70’ but with a red segment starting at ‘60’ – and to look through that tiny upright screen and over the rise and fall of that extraordinary bonnet is something of an understatement. The sense of anticipation is almost unbearable.

The big straight-six is already idling loudly as the car has been warmed through by an instructor. The noise makes a mockery of modern ‘sports’ exhausts tuned for a pleasing, singular howl. Inside the car is buzzing, droning, tingling and pulsating to layer upon layer of valvegear thrash, the chatter of the lightweight flywheel and general mechanical cacophony. It’s a warm day but inside the Lightweight it’s sweltering and the smell of hot oil and fuel just adds to the overwhelming sensory assault. My fears that this reincarnation might have been massaged and polished to an unrepresentative level of perfection immediately seem laughable. I’m already buzzing, and not just from the vaporised petrol fumes.

Sure enough I cough-splutter-howl and then cough-splutter-howl again out of the pitlane, the mechanical fuel injection doing its binary thing and my tentativeness hardly helping. The four-speed ‘box is actually pretty easy to use and the shift is light – nothing like as heavy as a Cayman GT4’s, for example, but longer of throw – while the steering quickly lightens up from the really heavyweight feel at very low speeds. The first lap or two are something of a blur but the Lightweight quickly feels absolutely transparent. It’s narrow and nimble but also very physical, something that’s exacerbated by the tight, short loop we’re using, which requires plenty of downshifts, my best (read ‘barely passable’) double-declutching and real muscle in the slowest corners just to get the car to turn. The rack and pinion steering is fantastic, though, its weight and texture an ever-changing picture of the grip and surface rolling beneath the Dunlop CR65 racing tyres. The unassisted brakes too have a wonderful level of detail despite very little pedal travel.

It’s quickly obvious that the Lightweight needs a fast, flowing track to truly come alive but there are glimpses of its balance, poise and outright performance potential on every lap. The straight allows the stuttering low-rev delivery to morph into a big-hearted shove that grows in intensity as you close in on 6500rpm, the various mechanical noises converging into one triumphant howl. There’s a left-right

Right: exposed aluminium inside emphasises the lightweight nature of the car, although customers can specify a fully trimmed interior if they’ve missed the point slightly; roll-cage is standard equipment



JAGUAR LIGHTWEIGHT E-TYPE

Engine In-line 6-cyl, 3868cc

Power 340bhp @ 6500rpm

Torque 280lb ft @ 4500rpm

Transmission Four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

Front suspension Double wishbones, torsion bar springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Lower wishbones, upper driveshaft links, radius arms, four coil springs, dampers, anti-roll bar

Brakes Discs, 305mm front, 286mm rear

Wheels 7 x 15in front, 8 x 15in rear

Tyres 6.00L15 CR65 front, 6.50L15 CR65 rear

Weight 1000kg

Power-to-weight 345bhp/ton

0-60mph 5.0sec (est)

Top speed 185mph (gearing dependent)

Basic price £1,000,000+

On sale Sold out

evo rating: ★★★★★

combination where the front tyres threaten to understeer but, if you get it just right, the engine hits its sweet spot just at the perfect moment to lock up the Powr-Lok limited-slip differential and get the rear of the car steering for you, a smidge of oversteer then settling into a beautiful four-wheel drift. It’s fleeting, but enough to get the hairs on the back of your neck standing proud.

The overwhelming impression is one of absolute immersion. It’s funny because every phase of the track is lengthened compared with when you’re in a modern sports car. You need to brake earlier, change gear more deliberately, tease the car into the apex rather than just twitch a super-alert steering system to get it turned in, and anticipate the engine’s inconsistent response with big throttle openings... And yet while that cornering phase is extended, as a driver you’re so much busier, so much more focused on getting each disparate element to come together as one fluid process that it feels more frantic.

It’s exhausting but also utterly elating. Every lap I make mistakes and at each corner the Lightweight feels like it could give more. But the resolve to do better, to find that magical place where the car is gently drifting sideways whilst driving forwards, to make this tiny, wonderful car perform to its optimum, grows in intensity. The very essence of the thrill of driving is found right here in all its flawed perfection. What a machine. ☒





RE-IMAGINED
ICONS

3 / 3

Money for something

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

Can a 1960s Alfa GTA really justify a Ferrari-money price tag? When it's an Alfaholics GTA-R 270, it can



D

DASHING DOWN THE NARROW LANES

that lead to the hairpin, the little Alfa feels absolutely at home. Like a red rat up a green drainpipe, it is scurrying between the tight banks and nipping through the corners. I reach for the long gearlever and find the smooth surface of its polished black top, feeling it buzz tinglingly in my left palm as the revs reach 7000rpm before I pull back smartly for fourth. A moment or two more on the throttle, then it's onto the middle pedal, pressing hard with the ball of my foot, leaning on the unservoed brakes, canting my heel across to blip the throttle once, twice as we line up for the left-hand switchback.

Tucking the nose into the bend with the small steering wheel, the front hooks in sweetly towards the kerb, meaning the throttle can be applied early and with a bit of purpose. The front momentarily lightens past the apex, pushing wide of the line a fraction, but then the tail swings round as the road opens out and the steering seems to begin correcting the car almost of its own accord. This isn't a snappy stab of oversteer but a decent drift. Throttle wide open, diff locked, the car is almost walking itself wide on the exit of the bend as it slides up the road. There's time to enjoy it and the huge smile on my face and the feeling in my stomach says I really am.

While you have almost certainly heard of Singer and no doubt were aware of Jaguar building six 'new' Lightweight E-types, you might not be so familiar with Alfaholics and its GTA-R. The company was started in the 1970s by Richard Banks, who ran race teams and then restored and sold 105-series Alfas. When his sons Andrew and Max came along, they graduated from karting to building and racing their own Alfa.

'We developed a Watt's linkage suspension and tubular wishbones to modify the geometry and make our race car quicker and quicker,' says Max. 'Then, after university, I joined Alfaholics and we decided to basically productionise all

our race-car parts and offer them to customers around the world. We made a batch of bits and they sold ridiculously quickly, so we knew there was a market for this!'

The car Alfaholics has brought to south Wales today is actually Max's own. He began developing it ten years ago from a 200,000-mile 1967 'step-nose' GT 1300 Junior, gradually updating it, honing it, tweaking it and driving it out to the Nürburgring and Spa for testing (and for fun).

'The idea was to try to keep the essence of it being a 50-year-old car in terms of the body shape – using original lights, et cetera – so that it looks like an original GTA,' says Max. One thing that has been changed very slightly as far as the looks of the car are concerned is the wheels, but there are sound engineering reasons for this, as Max explains: 'To get better tyres, bigger brakes and better suspension geometry, we've recast the original, 14-inch diameter wheel in 15 inches. Now we've got a 300mm brake disc with a six-pot caliper in the front and the extra inch also gives us better roll centres and caster. The rear axle's tweaked for

item, too. 'It's our own diff, which we've developed with copper-sintered friction plates,' says Max. 'This has allowed us to reduce the total preload on the diff so it hasn't got too high a preload and becomes too noisy. It's running with our own specification of ramp angle and we actually run no ramp during deceleration, which is why you can brake and move the car left and right and place it where you want on the way into a corner. The diff isn't trying to hold the car straight. This car is also running two-and-a-quarter-inch springs with coilover dampers at the back, which again massively reduces all the unsprung weight.'

And then there's the engine. 'Under the bonnet is an Alfa 75-based Twin Spark unit,' explains Max, 'so it's a proper Alfa aluminium-block, four-cylinder engine. It's the last of the line of the true Alfa four-cylinder engines that goes back to the '60s and is what these cars had originally. The head design is quite like the old Autodelta [competition department's] GTA cylinder head. We build it as a 215bhp 2 litre.'

As it developed the bits for Max's car, Alfaholics also sold them through its mail-order

Right: looks remain largely true to the original, but GTA geeks will spot subtle differences such as the inch-larger wheels. **Opposite page:** extreme weight-saving measures in evidence



camber and toe, to improve the grip and setup for the tyres, and then the top reaction arm, which originally is a cast-iron part, we redo in aluminium and then put a spherical bearing in the back of it to allow the axle to articulate nicely over the bumps. A lot of cars end up with heavy-duty rubber bushes to try to stop the axle from moving sideways, but this doesn't allow the axle to articulate and you feel the back of the car bobbling around. We put a uniball in the back, which gives us no lateral movement at all but allows the axle to move vertically.'

The limited-slip differential is a bespoke

business. But with pictures of Max's project being posted on the company's website, people began asking if they could have a complete car like his GTA-R. That evolved into the business going full circle and having a workshop again, just like it had when Richard started it. Now the mail-order side and the workshop run in tandem. Most orders go abroad, with Australia and America being the biggest markets. You can order all the parts for a GTA-R in a crate and the guys reckon they ship one full kit out every couple of weeks. About 30 to 40 cars also go through the workshop, near Bristol, each



‘The carbonfibre doors are so light that only a slam will do’



‘The GTA-R begs to be driven
quickly and revved hard from
the moment you get into it’



year, although Alfaholics only does about two full builds in that time.

A fully built GTA-R costs – and I hope you're sitting down for this – about £120,000. However, Max's GTA-R has evolved a step further and for £198,000 Alfaholics will now build you a car like the one you see here, which is even lighter and even more powerful, with custom parts that can't be purchased separately. For starters there is a carbonfibre bootlid, bonnet and doors. The front wishbones are made from titanium, as are the wheel nuts and wheel bolts. Everything that can be machined from billet aluminium has been and there are some parts that have more holes than a Polo factory.

The end result is a kerb weight of 835kg – a reduction of 80kg over a 'normal' GTA-R – and that's with the leather and Wilton wool carpet still in the car. This car is what they're calling the 'GTA-R 270' (for 270bhp/ton), but there is also a 290 version coming with a 2.3-litre engine that has a long-stroke crank, a bigger bore and a special sort of closed-in deck to stiffen the block up. In theory that is a 240bhp engine, with a leap in torque from 160lb ft up to 200lb ft. The GTA-R 290 will set you back £222,000, which is a hell of a lot of money, but as the Banks brothers are at pains to explain, this represents the amount of time that goes into each one.

I have to say that, walking up to the car, I am already rather smitten. There is that slightly odd proportion to cars like this and the Ford Escort that doesn't look quite right from some angles, with the glasshouse appearing too long, but then the aesthetic is just perfect from others. The rear arches look cool but curiously unfinished compared to the rest of the car, but that's how they were on the original Autodelta design. There is no need for me to write reams on the beautifully drilled parts as you can lust after them yourself through the photos. However, I will just mention that after you've pulled open the door with the teeny-tiny handle, you can't help but notice that even the door closing plates have been holed like they've had close-quarters contact with the wrong end of an Uzi.

Inside, the car looks like new. But better. The leather covering the Recaro buckets is woven in places to mimic that of the original seats, the carpet is thick and luxurious, and the pedals are machined from billet aluminium by the same company that does the dash in a Bugatti and the drinks cabinet in a Rolls-Royce. In fact, all the pieces such as the door handles and window winders have been machined from billet to save

Left: plated limited-slip diff designed in-house by Alfaholics deactivates during deceleration. This allows the driver to place the car accurately for turn-in then leave the scene in style...

weight, before being polished so that you wouldn't know they weren't the chromed originals. Although you cannot use them because of the lightweight (but leather covered) T45 cage that has been welded in, retaining the seats in the back is the final element that makes this feel like a very habitable car indeed.

If all this sounds a little too new, the smell of leather and wool mixed in with a faint whiff of petrol soon transports you back to a different age. The patina of the dials and switches combined with the Italian scripts declaring 'GIRI x100' on the Veglia rev-counter, or *ventil, aperto, chiuso* on the heater controls, also transports you to somewhere entirely more glamorous.

After a few minutes drinking it all in I pull the carbon door shut. Then I have to open it again and shut it properly because it's so light that only a slam will do. The engine starts easily on the key and the competition clutch and lightweight flywheel don't combine as aggressively as I'd feared, so it's easy to get moving. Manoeuvring at low speed is a doddle too, because the car has a speed-sensitive electric power-steering system that gives your forearms just enough assistance in a car park but then basically disappears once you're up and running. This leaves you to enjoy one of the main reasons for buying one of these new-old cars: steering feel.

The weighting and tactility from the small wheel is everything we crave in modern cars but so rarely find. In fact, when you start to listen, it's not just the wheel but the whole car that is talking. The seat is reclined a fraction and the pedals seem to lean forwards to meet your feet but it all feels perfect to me. Changing gear is curious at first because you have this very precise, small action being controlled at a distance by a very long, slightly vague lever, yet it is quick and satisfying once you're acclimatised.

There is a temptation to look at the little Alfa and think it must be fragile and will need to be treated with kid gloves, but the GTA-R begs to be driven quickly and revved hard from the moment you get

into it. Within a few minutes you're reminded of just what a wonderful soundtrack a good naturally aspirated four-cylinder can provide. Gruff and rough, it has a terrifically hard bark that makes it sound fabulously aggressive. It's fast too, with a bridge-to-gantry time around the Nordschleife of close to eight minutes.

I was worried that the Yokohama Neova AD08 tyres might be too sticky and rob the flyweight Alfa of some adjustability, but not a bit of it. Through a particularly good sequence of bends it dances between direction changes, light on its feet. The suspension is relatively firm and down the bumpier stretches of Welsh blacktop you can still occasionally feel the vertical limits of the back axle, but this never seems to hamper progress. The advantage of the firm suspension setup is that there's relatively little roll, so where you would expect a car of this vintage to lean and get vague, the Alfa is perfectly supported on its two-way adjustable dampers. This means that it allows you to play with it accurately and confidently, revelling in

the beautifully balanced handling, working both ends up to and then over their limits.

The combination of feedback, smells, sound, quality and the sheer playfulness of this car is something really magical. I can imagine driving one every day and enjoying it wherever I went, rarely wanting for anything more.

Alfaholics is a great name and whoever thought of it must have been chuffed to bits. But there is a sinister undertone. You only really discover this darker side once you've driven one of the company's products, but it is very real. I speak from experience here, because after just one day's exposure to this car I found myself craving more. In the days and weeks after I drove it I lost hours looking at old 105-series Alfas on the internet – sometimes in the middle of the night. I kept replaying that glorious drive in my head, thinking about the sweet oversteer and longing for more, wondering where I could get some money to feed this desire. After a while I had to admit that after just one taste of an Alfaholics product I might be addicted. ☒

ALFAHOLICS GTA-R 270

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 2 litres

Power 222bhp @ 7000rpm

Torque 160lb ft @ n/a rpm

Transmission Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential

Front suspension Double wishbones, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension Live axle, coil springs, adjustable dampers

Brakes Ventilated 300mm front discs, solid 267mm rear discs

Wheels 7 x 15in front and rear

Tyres 195/55 R15 front and rear

Weight 835kg

Power-to-weight 270bhp/ton

0-60mph 4.6sec (claimed)

Top speed 148mph (claimed)

Basic price £198,000

evo rating: ★★★★★



Cars shown:

*right: 2013 EAGLE SPEEDSTER
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completed to our 4.7 litre Eagle
SuperSport specification*

*below: 1966 JAGUAR E-TYPE
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Hatch of the day

by DAN PROSSER

PHOTOGRAPHY by
DREW GIBSON

These three hatches have all held the front-drive Nürburgring lap record in the last year, but which car will be fastest on track when independently tested in production spec, on the same day, in the same conditions and with the same driver?



ONE OF THE THREE CARS YOU SEE HERE IS the fastest front-wheel-drive production car of all time. Together they are the only front-driven hot hatches to have recorded sub-eight-minute Nürburgring Nordschleife lap times and each one of them is capable of outperforming more powerful and expensive machinery around any given circuit. Between them, the Honda Civic Type R, Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R and SEAT Leon Cupra Ultimate Sub8 Performance Pack break new ground for the once humble hot hatch. This is the first time the three cars have gone head-to-head in an independent test.

Early last year, SEAT became the first of the three manufacturers to announce a Nürburgring lap time. With Jordi Gené – a SEAT factory driver in the World Touring Car Championship – at the wheel, the Leon set a time of

7min 58.4sec using the same Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 tyres as our test car (a £460 option).

The record was short-lived. A few weeks later, Renault declared a new record of its own, lowering the benchmark to 7min 54.4sec. Renaultsport test driver Laurent Hurgon set the Mégane's record time and the car wore the same tyres as the Leon, which in this case are standard fit.

In March this year, though, Honda announced a new record of 7min 50.6sec, cutting 3.8sec from Renault's attempt. Honda declined to name the driver. All three lap times were verified on video and each manufacturer cut out the 200m T13 straight (an act recognised as the industry standard), but from there things start to get a little murky.

The Civic was a pre-production model in what Honda



calls a 'representative specification'. A roll-cage was fitted for safety, but it was mounted on bushes, says Honda, so that it didn't add any torsional rigidity. The car's radio, passenger seat and air conditioning unit were removed to offset the extra weight of the cage. Curiously, Honda also declined to mention in its official statement exactly which tyres that particular Civic was using.

The three lap times were set on different days, with different drivers and with some uncertainty around the exact specifications of the cars. The Nürburgring lap time race is an unofficial, unregulated form of motorsport, which makes for a pretty flawed comparison. By gathering the trio of cars at Bedford Autodrome's 1.8-mile West Circuit and setting lap times of our own, however, we can compare them under consistent and fair conditions and establish with a little more authority which one is the fastest. Our times, by the way, will not necessarily correspond with the Nürburgring times...

Turbocharged 2-litre four-cylinder engines power all three cars, but the Civic is comfortably the most potent. With 306bhp it outpunches the Mégane's 271bhp and the Leon's 276bhp, although the picture changes slightly when we consider power-to-weight ratios. Having been on

the most extreme weight loss regime of the trio – doing without air con, rear seats, a radio and sound deadening – the Mégane Trophy-R is 81kg lighter than the Civic Type R and 3kg lighter than the Leon. With 212bhp per ton, the Renault trails the SEAT's 216bhp per ton power-to-weight ratio, but both fall short of the Honda's 226.

All three cars are fitted with a six-speed manual gearbox and they all use a limited-slip differential to improve traction. All wear 235/35 R19 tyres, too. The Civic is the value proposition, starting at £29,995. Equipped with the Ultimate Sub8 Performance Pack and Cup 2 tyres, the Leon costs £31,410, which is still comfortably cheaper than the £36,430 Mégane.

A bigger brake setup is included in the SEAT's upgrade kit. With 370mm discs and four-piston Brembo calipers up front, the Leon has the highest specification of brakes by a clear margin. Not only do they look the part behind the retina-searing orange 19-inch wheels, they also give the car massive braking performance.

The ambient conditions on this late-August day are ideal for the task in hand: 21C, bone-dry tarmac and nothing more than a light breeze in the air. The lap times will be recorded using our GPS-based VBOX timing gear



Below: Mégane Trophy-R's natural bias is towards oversteer in high-speed corners; the Leon Ultimate Sub8, meanwhile, tends to stay tied to the track

and verified on video. The Honda is the only car with air conditioning, which will be switched off for the timed runs so there is no unfair loss of engine power. All three cars will have their stability control systems switched off.

I head out in the Civic first. Initially the driver's seat feels as though it's set a little too high, but you quickly get used to the position and instead begin to appreciate the support you get from those firmly stuffed bolsters. With '+R' mode engaged, the Civic feels darty and flat-bodied. The steering is incredibly direct, too, which gives the Type R the immediacy of a Touring Car, but between corner entry and apex the front axle just begins to bleed away into understeer. The chassis wants to change direction instantaneously and hold a line, but those Continental SportContact 6 tyres struggle to keep up.

Mobile and adjustable at road speeds, the rear axle becomes rather lifeless on circuit, which means there's not a great deal that can be done about the mid-corner understeer. That makes the turn-in phase really critical, because if you do get greedy and cause the front axle to push, you simply have to ride it out. In the long corners you can feel the lap time slipping away, but at least the tightly wound LSD means you can get back on the power good

and early when pulling away from slower corners.

The Civic's brakes are strong and they maintain their performance throughout a series of laps, but the car is unstable under very heavy braking from high speeds. On more than one occasion that instability causes me to bail out of a corner and abort the lap.

Throttle response is surprisingly dull, but on a circuit you do at least learn to pre-empt the delay and stand on the pedal a fraction sooner. This new turbocharged engine does have good reach right at the top end, though, offering you another 500rpm or so with which to work compared with the other cars. The Civic clocks a best time of 1min 24.9sec.

Strapped tightly into the Mégane's bucket seat, I head out onto the circuit, take a deep breath and promptly half-spin at the second-gear hairpin. Like racing slicks, these Cup 2 tyres are all but useless when cold, so I spend the next two laps weaving and braking hard to find some temperature.

Once warmed through, the grip they generate is staggering. You can carry more speed into a corner, and the Mégane will also hold a tight line where the Civic began to wash out. In slow- and medium-speed corners

'Through the quick corners the Mégane is on a knife-edge'



the chassis feels well tied down, but in the quicker stuff it actually becomes alarmingly oversteery in its balance.

This car really does take some driving. Through the quick, fourth-gear corners at the end of the lap (see map on page 109) the Trophy-R is on a knife-edge, but if you settle the car before turning in and reapply the power early it'll get through without biting. Whereas in the Civic you tend to manage understeer, in the Mégane you wrestle high-speed oversteer. That pointy balance and innate adjustability make chasing a lap time in the French car a truly thrilling experience.

Good though the Honda's seat is, the Renault's full bucket and harness is in another league. With the straps pulled tight you become the final component of the car, feeling every single chassis movement. You also don't need to brace yourself with your knees or cling on to the steering wheel to stay upright, which means you can be that much more delicate with your inputs.

With much more grip and a livelier chassis balance, the Mégane is comfortably quicker than the Civic. It lowers the benchmark to 1min 23.6sec, beating the Honda by 1.3 seconds.

Having learnt my lesson in the Renault, I spend a lap or two warming the Leon's tyres. Knowing that this car is only fractionally more powerful than the Mégane and a less overtly trackday-orientated machine, I wonder what hope it has of matching its lap time. Even at half speed the seat feels unsupportive and the steering a touch loose.

Once those tyres warm up, though, the Leon comes alive. Like the Mégane, it finds tremendous grip on its Cup 2 rubber, but it seems to be even more defiantly keyed into the track surface. Whereas the Renault will twitch and squirm in the high-speed sections, the Leon is perfectly secure, which gives the impression of it being even quicker through the corners.

The engine is fearsomely strong – even more so than the Civic's – and traction is resolute, while the braking performance requires a complete recalibration from the driver. The net result is that you find yourself arriving at corners at frightful speeds, but you can brake later in this car because the retardation is so forceful.

The Leon's massive straight-line and braking performance, combined with its stable chassis balance, put it in a different performance league to the other cars. It's as though you've just hoisted a spinnaker. You consciously sail past their braking points and feel it pull even harder down the straights.

It doesn't have the Trophy-R's taut body control – the Renault's Öhlins adjustable dampers are just sublime – so the Leon does roll and dive more, but you aren't dealing with anything like the same levels of high-speed oversteer. The Renault may be more dramatic and exciting, then, but the Cupra is just as engrossing because it draws you into wringing out every little bit of lap time.

For a car of this level of performance, however, the seats are woefully underspecified. With such enormous cornering ability, you need to be held tightly in position, but the standard seats are flat and unsupportive (SEAT does at least offer an upgraded bucket seat option for £1250). That

frustration aside, the Leon is mind-scrambling on circuit. It goes half a second quicker than the Mégane, setting a time of 1min 23.1sec.

So how did a car with far from the strongest power-to-weight ratio demolish the others so emphatically, and what exactly did happen to the Civic's grunt? Examining the lap traces and speed data on page 109 is revealing.

The SEAT's top speed of 109.4mph comes before braking for the first corner – that's nearly 2mph faster than the Mégane and over 1mph faster than the Civic. The Leon's superior stopping performance also means it can brake eight metres later than the Civic, despite carrying more speed, and it still slows down sufficiently to negotiate the tight hairpin. The Mégane is slower at the apex of the hairpin than the Civic, but it has a tidier run through to the exit and it comes close to matching the more powerful Civic down the next straight.

The Leon, though, is just so much faster. It hits 95mph before braking (at around point A on our track map), compared with 91mph for the Mégane and 93mph for the Civic. Once again the Leon is also better on the brakes into the following chicane. Despite having reached a higher speed, it gets down to 60mph in the same 59m as the lighter Mégane. The Civic, meanwhile, decelerates at nothing like the rate of the Leon.

All three cars are easily flat through the long left and



‘The SEAT’s braking performance puts it in a different league to the other cars’



Anti-clockwise from above:

Mégane's Sabelt harness is a real boon for trackday drivers; SEAT's wheels are also available in black; Sub8 in a rare (and provoked) opposite-lock moment; Honda's cosseting cabin boasts superb ergonomics and plenty of red trim; the sharp exterior is equally distinctive



the quick right-hander, but the Leon is enormously fast down the next straight. Again it touches 109mph (at point B) before braking for the hard left-hander, compared with 105mph for the Mégane and 102mph for the Civic.

I get so drawn in by the Leon's massive stopping ability that I actually brake a full 40m later in the SEAT than in the Civic. At the point where the Civic has slowed to 96mph, the Leon is still clipping along at 108mph. That's probably a little too late, truth be told, but the Leon has enough braking and cornering ability that its run through the S-bend isn't too heavily compromised. I turn into the first left-hander of the sequence at 79mph, some 7mph faster than in the Civic, and just about make the apex.

The Mégane carries a little less speed into the S-bend than the Leon, but it has a cleaner run through and gets a better exit. Once again, though, the Leon is faster down the next straight (towards point C), while the Civic also beats the Mégane.

Here's another example of the Leon vastly outperforming the Civic under braking. The Honda takes 70m to slow for the second hairpin (4), from a peak speed of 85mph to 53mph at turn-in. The SEAT brakes from 87mph to 52mph in just 60m. From the driver's seat you can feel the chassis hauling itself up with greater force.

The Civic has to shed more speed than the other two for the second chicane (5) and it carries less speed towards the penultimate corner of the lap (6). The Leon has a clear lead by now and I choose to bank the lap rather than risk making a mistake, which means the Mégane is actually a little quicker through the final two corners. Nonetheless, the Leon remains out of reach, while the Civic crosses the line 1.8sec off the ultimate pace.

The data paints a very clear picture: the Leon has far greater straight-line performance than either of its rivals and much better braking ability, too, but the Mégane actually carries fractionally more speed through corners. The Honda, meanwhile, is a match for the Renault in terms of straight-line performance, but it falls a long way short in the braking zones and the bends.

Interestingly, our results were the exact opposite of the Nürburgring times. Having driven the SEAT on track, it seems incredible to me that the Civic could have gone eight seconds faster around the Nordschleife than the Leon, but that discrepancy could be explained by any number of factors – ambient conditions, drivers, the Ring's mix of corners and straights compared with our test track or, maybe, something more underhand.

The Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R is the most exciting car here and the Leon, I'm quite certain, makes somewhat more than its quoted 276bhp. And while it may have been shown up around the West Circuit at Bedford Autodrome, the Civic Type R scores a moral victory for being the cheapest car here as well as the most useable on a daily basis, thanks to its air conditioning and all-weather Continental tyres.

The real winner, though, has orange wheels. On the evidence of this test, the SEAT Leon Cupra Ultimate Sub8 Performance Pack is the fastest front-wheel-drive production car of all time. ☒

RENAULTSPORT MÉGANE 275 TROPHY-R

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1988cc, turbo
Power 271bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 265lb ft @ 3000rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Torsion beam, coil springs, adjustable dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated discs, 340mm front, 290mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 8.25 x 19in front and rear
Tyres 235/35 R19 front and rear
Weight 1297kg
Power-to-weight 212bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 158mph (claimed)
Basic price £36,430

evo rating: ★★★★★

SEAT LEON CUPRA ULTIMATE SUB8

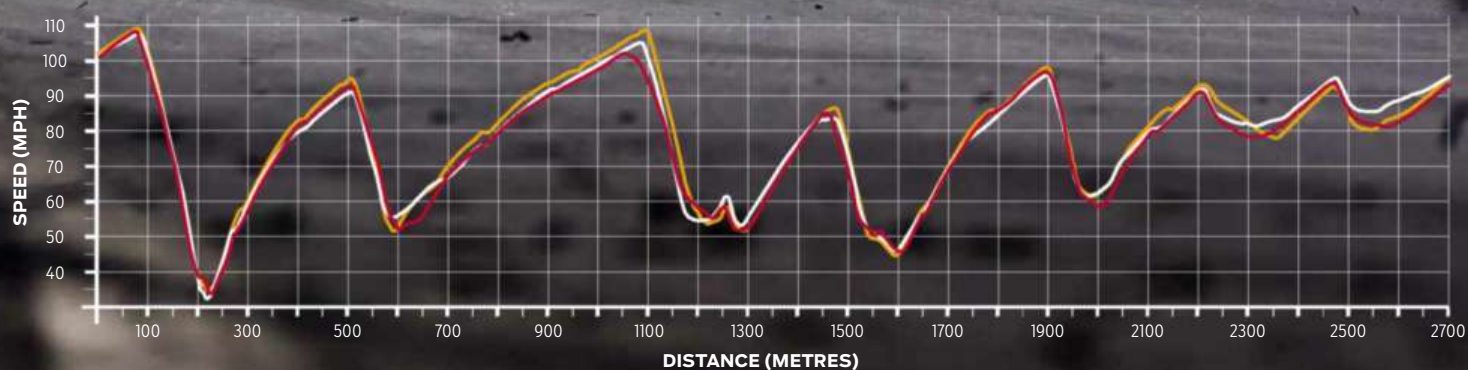
Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1984, turbo
Power 276bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 258lb ft @ 1750-5300rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
Front suspension MacPherson struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Brakes Ventilated discs, 390mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD
Wheels 19in front and rear
Tyres 235/35 R19 front and rear
Weight 1300kg
Power-to-weight 216bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.8sec (claimed)
Top speed 155mph (limited)
Basic price £31,410

evo rating: ★★★★★

HONDA CIVIC TYPE R

Engine In-line 4-cyl, 1996cc, turbo
Power 306bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 295lb ft @ 2500-4500rpm
Transmission Six-speed manual, front-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
Front suspension Dual-axis struts, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar
Rear suspension Torsion beam, coil springs, adaptive dampers
Brakes Ventilated 350mm front discs, solid 296mm rear discs, ABS, EBD
Wheels 19in front and rear
Tyres 235/35 R19 front and rear
Weight 1378kg
Power-to-weight 226bhp/ton
0-62mph 5.7sec (claimed)
Top speed 167mph (claimed)
Basic price £29,995

evo rating: ★★★★★



	Leon	Mégane	Civic
Lap time	1:23.1	1:23.6	1:24.9
Peak speed	109.4	107.6	108.3
Minimum corner speeds (mph)			
1	34.7	33.0	34.5
2	51.9	55.9	52.7
3	51.8	53.3	52.0
4	45.1	46.2	45.5
5	61.4	61.7	58.8
6	78.3	81.5	78.2
7	80.5	85.5	81.6
Maximum straight-line speeds (mph)			
A	95.0	91.4	92.9
B	108.6	105.2	102.3
C	86.7	83.8	85.2
D	98.3	96.1	97.2
E	93.4	92.1	91.3
F	92.9	95.2	93.8

Venue Bedford Autodrome,
Bedfordshire, UK

GPS 52.235435, -0.473227

Conditions Dry, 21C

Layout West Circuit

Length 1.8 miles

Direction Anti-clockwise



BIG THRILLS, LITTLE BILLS





BIG THRILLS

*No matter what your budget, a new thrill of driving is closer than you think. **evo** staff reveal the cars they dream about owning and wish they could commit to*

LITTLE BILLS

BIG THRILLS, LITTLE BILLS

by JETHRO BOVINGDON

£35k 200mph cars



Below: Britain, Japan, Germany: double-ton cars are everywhere now, and many are pleasingly affordable



'I bought one'



Nick Hapgood

Porsche 911 Turbo (996)

'For me, the 996 Turbo is an iconic car. I'd always wanted one but they'd been just out of reach from a budget point of view. Instead, I settled on a Carrera 4S, but the thought of grabbing a Turbo if the right car came up for the right money was always there. This is that car! It was a private sale but with the reassurance of a huge history file with expensive consumables that were in perfect order. I didn't hang around.

'I didn't immediately drive it before handing over the money as I like to let the person selling the car drive me so I can get a feel for it first. When I finally did, I was a bit shocked. I'd had an E46 M3 in the past but this was a big step up. It's like the Millennium Falcon! But for me the biggest surprise is the chassis – it's so much more responsive and agile than my M3's was. These cars tend to get pigeonholed as straight-line machines but that really isn't the case. It's terrific fun and feels small, light and has incredible traction thanks to the four-wheel drive.

'My car is a 51-plate from early 2002 – a manual, it had to be a manual – and I think I timed the purchase pretty much perfectly. I bought it last September and they seem to have climbed from the mid-£20,000s to over £30,000. Even at that money I can't think of a replacement. I'm going to Le Mans next year in it and I'm off to Düsseldorf very soon. Hopefully I'll stumble across some empty derestricted Autobahn.'

Tips

Got yourself a car that will do 200mph or thereabouts? The fantasy of a dead-of-the-night run on an empty Autobahn might seem impossibly intrepid, but the reality is traffic, roadworks and, of course, a great deal of danger. Better to check vital tyre pressures, brake wear and fluids and attempt to hit the big two-oh-oh in a controlled environment. We'd suggest heading to vmax200.com and attending one of their events at the Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground.

The first time you achieve 200mph is a big moment. It lives with you forever, played out in perfect detail whenever you cast your mind back to that magical split-second. My moment came way back in 2003, when we collectively decided it'd be fun to try to hit the double ton on public roads (*evo* 055). A couple of weeks later we were in Germany on the A5, stationed between Karlsruhe and Mannheim and waiting for the endless line of trucks to break up enough to make an uninterrupted, meaningful attempt at hitting 200mph.

Former *evo* co-editor John Barker was the first to venture out, at about 10pm in a 1996-gen Ruf R Turbo with 542bhp. As you'd expect of a Ruf product, it breezed up to 200mph, stable and assured. I was next up in the absolutely absurd MTM Bimoto – an Audi TT with one engine up front and another in the middle. In combination, the two 1.8-litre turbocharged engines produced 740bhp. God it was fast, pulling to 150mph or so before I'd even exited the slip road, each gearshift accompanied by a great orange flash from flaming exhausts. The road was three lanes wide, trucks ambling along in the inside lane at decent enough intervals that I knew they'd stay put (crucial, because the Bimoto needed every inch of those two clear lanes above about 180mph as it weaved and bobbed like a little boat in a raging storm).

Fortunately I didn't need to run over 180mph for long. Unlike the Ruf, which required patience to trickle up from 190mph to 200mph, each digit burning longer and longer on the bright red VBOX readout, the Bimoto just tore through the 190s and flashed past 200. The data revealed it hit 204.8mph and on the return leg I did 201.1mph uphill just for the hell of it. From getting in the car at the services, through joining the A5, hitting over 200mph, turning around at the next junction and then doing it again, to rolling into the car park to a stop with

the Bimoto nearly on fire as the engines were so hot, took just over 11 minutes. The TVR Tuscan S never did hit 200mph, neither did the Esthi 2.4 (an Elise with the 2.7-litre twin-turbocharged V6 from an Audi RS4). Nor even the Pagani Zonda S...

But you can. For not much money, too. Should you want to do such a thing? Probably not. With high speed comes high risk and the thought of a tyre going pop at over three miles a minute doesn't bear thinking about. Even so, every time I'm in Germany in something suitably fast, I can't quite resist the urge to see what it'll

'THE LURE OF HITTING V-MAX IS STRONG AND NEVER SEEMS TO GO AWAY, AND FOR £35,000 THE LIST OF 200MPH MACHINES IS LONG AND MOUTH-WATERING'

do... An indicated 199mph in a GT-R, an easy 207mph in a Lamborghini Aventador, about 124mph in various diesel hire cars, 118mph in a Honda Jazz Hybrid down a steep hill (long story). The lure of hitting V-max is strong and never seems to go away.

For £35,000, the list of 200mph machines is long and mouth-watering. Do it in imperious luxury with a Bentley Continental GT (although you'll need more like £45,000 to hit a genuine 202mph with the GT Speed), do it with ease in a modified Nissan GT-R or do it accompanied by a thunderous V8 soundtrack with a massaged Mercedes SL55 AMG.

For me, though, the ultimate 200mph bargain is a V10-powered BMW M6; yours for as little as £13,000. Get the car derestricted and 205mph is on the cards. It won't be easy, but hitting over 200mph shouldn't be easy, should it? I was cheating in the MTM Bimoto really, although it felt pretty heroic at the time.

BIG THRILLS, LITTLE BILLS



£25k Big GTs

by STUART GALLAGHER

'I bought one'



Mark Finnegan
Maserati GranSport

'I've been a lifelong Maserati fan and this is my fourth Coupe – I started with the original 3200 GT. For me, the GranSport is *the* affordable supercar: it's properly quick and it's a car that after every drive I still get out of and take a glance back at when I walk away.

'With Maserati you either get it or you don't, and for me it's about buying into the brand and getting the most from it. You could argue the same for Aston Martin or Jaguar, but for me Maserati is the one.

'It's the combination of affordability, practicality and style that appeals. The GranSport is a proper GT car. It can swallow the family – my wife and two teenage boys – and our luggage and offers all the comfort they require while I'm enjoying the drive. We've all got smiles on our faces when we travel in it, but from behind the wheel, mine is for a different reason to theirs!

'The GranSport offers that perfect combination of pace and grace that appeals in a GT car. It's not my only car, so every drive is purely for fun. Whether it's a short run in the country or a longer trip, it's the car that never fails to put a grin on my face. It's got **evoness**. For a bigish car it's still quick – 400bhp and 1680kg is not to be dismissed lightly – and I've had a performance exhaust fitted, too, so the V8 sounds even better.

'Will I ever sell it? I can't, I've left it to my son in my will.'

Tips

Fast GTs may be the most affordable entry point to exotic car ownership, but never forget that these are big, complicated automotive showcases. Under warranty they cause few headaches, but as used buys the repair bills can break the bank. That technology is great, when it works, and the joy of these GTs is indulging in it all, but keeping everything functioning takes careful financial planning.

Right: there is a wide range of cars in the used GT space, and almost all of them will have already endured massive depreciation

Who can resist the lure of a big GT car? One that, on the day it was first registered, was the pick of its manufacturer's range, stuffed from bumper to bumper with every conceivable piece of technology and, crucially, the biggest, most powerful and dynamically enhanced powertrain and chassis its maker could muster at the time. Especially when they now cost in the region of 25 per cent of their new list price. No? Me neither.

Box-fresh, these are the kind of cars that some of us find hard to justify. Jaguar's XKR is a stonking coupe employing a creamy supercharged V8 with a violent roar and seemingly ageless looks. But it cost around £80,000 when Jaguar was selling it new, which meant it was up against all kinds of superior and enticing machinery from Aston Martin to Porsche. However, while your bank might despair at new-car depreciation, used GT cars are more forgiving (but still represent plenty of ISA-emptying potential).

Jaguar XKR

If you believe some corners of the British motoring press, you might be under the impression that Jaguar's XKR is one of the finest grand touring sports car ever made. Clearly it's not, for a number of reasons. Chief among them are that the car can trace its ancestry back to the arc (I think it's called the XJS), its powertrain is more brawn than brain, and for a car that has a near two-metre wide footprint, there's not a great deal of space should you wish to actually take it on a grand tour.

When you're paying £80,000 for a car, these things matter, but when you're only paying a third of that, they don't. The 4.2-litre V8's 414bhp is sufficient to haul the 1705kg body around at enough pace to keep a hot hatch honest – in a straight line at least – and despite

its age, the rear-drive chassis feels sharp and communicative. And as with many post-2000 Jaguars, what XKRs lack in cutting-edge tech they make up for with an ageless design.

Mercedes CL63 AMG

536bhp, eight cylinders, two turbos, 590lb ft, £115,680. And that's before you get to the 186mph (delimited) and 4.5sec 0-62mph time. It's hard to ignore the CL63's numerical supremacy. Even better is that the only number to drop in the last five years is the price: CL63s are now less than a quarter of their list price.

'WHEN FIRST REGISTERED, THESE CARS WERE THE PICK OF THEIR MANUFACTURERS' RANGES, STUFFED FROM BUMPER TO BUMPER WITH TECHNOLOGY'

Granted, the CL63 is no AMG GT S, but it will demolish miles like a Japanese rugby player breaks a Springbok's hopes. Its chassis isn't as exciting as, say, an Aston Martin DB9's, but that twin-turbocharged V8 is truly magnificent, and if you can track down an example fitted with the optional Performance Package (these boast even bigger numbers than those stated above, top speed notwithstanding), you may not have the prettiest GT car on the road, but my god you'll have one of the quickest – and for less than a SEAT Leon Cupra.

Maserati GranSport

Another V8 for Ford Focus money, but this Italian GT is less rampant than the other two. However, what the Maser lacks in firepower it more than makes up for in Italian passion, **beauty and soul**, as owner Mark Finnegan (left) explains.



BIG THRILLS, LITTLE BILLS

by RICHARD MEADEN

£20k Ring heroes





Left to right: Cayman, 350Z and Mégane are all well within budget and perfect tools for lapping the Ring

'I bought one'



Damien Bradley
BMW M3 (E46)

'I did my first ever trackday about five years ago, in my wife's BMW 320d of all things. I also took my own VW Golf R32 on track during a corporate event and loved it, so I was keen to do more. I didn't want to use my daily car on circuit, though, and everybody I spoke to said an M3 would be perfect.

'I wondered about buying a car that had already been prepared for track work, but I was worried I wouldn't be able to sell it on again if I decided I didn't like it. I bought a standard car four years ago for £6000. It's a 2001 car with a manual gearbox.

'The first thing I did was upgrade to Toyo R1Rs, which are road-legal, track-focused tyres. They made a massive difference. Since then I've added Performance Friction brakes and KW Clubsport coilovers. I'm planning to fit a roll-cage, buckets seats and harnesses very soon, and the car has plenty of performance for the time being.

'I've also done a handful of driver-training courses because that's the best money you can spend. It hasn't been cheap – I've had to replace the clutch and gearbox – but it's a hobby and I love it.

'I do something like six trackdays a year. Cadwell Park is probably my favourite circuit in the UK, but a friend and I are hoping to go to Spa early next year and, of course, I fancy going to the Nürburgring, too!

Tips

If you're getting serious about lapping the Ring, you really should fit a roll-cage, a pair of racing seats and full harnesses, as when it comes to driving the Nordschleife, it's always best to hope for the best but plan for the worst. Oh, and one more thing: make sure you've got a few euros of your budget left for that other essential Nürburgring ritual: a steak on a stone and a Bitburger at the Pistenklause. There's no better place to round off your mission to the Nordschleife. Or to plan the next one...

Its global popularity might have robbed the place of its mystery, but driving at the Nürburgring remains one of the great rites of passage. Best of all, it's one within reach of anyone with a driving licence, a car and 27 euros to spend on a tourist lap.

The problem, if you can call it such, is much the same as with chocolate or cold beer: one taste of this remarkable circuit is never enough. For the seriously addicted, the only way to feed their dependency is with a dedicated Ring car, or at least a daily driver they can tweak to better cope with the rigours – and dangers – of tackling the sternest challenges a car and driver can face.

Much like its accessibility, the beauty of the Ring is that the last thing you want or need to enjoy the place is a supercar. To reflect this, we've chosen a notional £20k budget. Yes, that's still a significant amount of money, especially if it's devoted to weekend wheels, but the other beauty of the Ring is that you'll always have a mate or two who are up for sharing the costs and fun of the adventure.

How you divide your budget between car purchase and subsequent modifications is, of course, down to you, but there's a wealth of great metal out there for around £12k-15k. That leaves a decent contingency for upgrades and a few consumables, and maybe even fuel and hotel money for your first trip to the Eifel.

What you choose to base your project on is a tricky one, though logic and common sense points towards a German marque. They tend to have a strong aftermarket following and, being completely pragmatic, you're more likely to find someone to fix your car near the circuit when the (almost) inevitable happens and something breaks.

Assuming that you're funding the car and

upgrades from our suggested £20k budget, we'd be sorely tempted by a Porsche Cayman S, as prices start at around £14k. Sadly, E92 (V8) M3s are out of budget, but the earlier E46 M3 is now a remarkable bargain, with leggy examples available for around £6k and cars with sensible miles for around £12k.

Stray from the German marques and the

'THERE'S A WEALTH OF GREAT METAL OUT THERE FOR AROUND £12K-15K. THAT LEAVES A DECENT CONTINGENCY FOR UPGRADES AND A FEW CONSUMABLES'

Nissan 350Z is an absolute steal at £6k, while the later 370Z remains strong value at £15k. There's plenty of kit to improve the chassis and boost the handling of both for track work. The multitude of Impreza STI derivatives are equally affordable and suitable. If hot hatches are your thing then look no further than the Renaultsport Mégane: £20k would buy you the iconic R26.R, which needs no upgrades, while the later 250 Cup can be had for around £12k. With remaps costing £500, taking these cars to a reliable 300bhp, you'd have a truly mighty Ring car that would easily double as your weekday wheels.

Personally, I'd be most tempted by an E46 M3. It's an inherently brilliant car, with a fine balance, magical engine and more than ample performance for the Ring. There's also a wealth of suspension and brake upgrades available, which you could install without destroying its usability as a daily driver. That these cars still compete in VLN and N24 races is proof of their enduring appeal.

BIG THRILLS, LITTLE BILLS



£15k Pure fun

by DAN PROSSER

'I bought one'



Vince Miller
Vauxhall Monaro

'I've always loved the Monaro. My old commute was too long to make the man-maths work, but when I got a new job five miles from home, it all fell into place.

'You don't buy a Monaro because it's cheap to run. It's expensive to fuel and a pair of rear tyres costs £350, but it otherwise makes a great everyday car. It doesn't have a really stiff ride like an S-line Audi, but it isn't too wallowy in the corners, either.

'It's nice to know the performance is there, but you very quickly get into licence-losing territory. To make the most of the performance, I go along to Vauxhall owners' events such as Thunder Road at RAF Woodbridge in Suffolk, where the objective is to reach the highest speed over a standing mile. The events are supposed to be a bit of fun, but the guys who have spent a lot of money on their cars tend to take it more seriously. Some of them have spent six-figure sums on their Monaros, so maybe that's understandable!

'I haven't spent anywhere near six figures on mine, but it has cost a small fortune. I've upgraded the suspension bushes and shocks, it's had CNC ported heads, an uprated camshaft, and so on. It makes 360bhp at the wheels, which means around 460bhp at the flywheel.

'I used to change my cars every few months, but I don't have any plans to sell the Monaro. What else is there at this price that has the same performance and character?'

Tips

The Elise and Seven both offer pure, unadulterated thrills at very tempting prices, but it takes a hardy sort to use them on a daily basis. Even the apparently more practical Elise could lose its charm on a long motorway jaunt. Either one would make the perfect foil to a diesel Golf runaround, for instance, but the cost of taxing and insuring two cars does soon add up.

Trim the fat from any modern supercar – the excess weight, the creature comforts, the swollen footprint, the unnecessary power – and you'll eventually be left with a Lotus Elise.

Keep going and you'll soon whittle it down to a Caterham. Both cars distil the Thrill of Driving to an essence, doing away with the filters that distance the driver from a machine.

Of course, there is another way to interpret the phrase 'pure fun', and that's to remove the emphasis from the first word and place it on the second one. Hopefully that'll explain why, for the first time in the history of motoring journalism, a Vauxhall Monaro is being proposed as an alternative to a Caterham.

Lotus Elise S2

I'm 18 years old. I'm at Castle Combe with ten or 12 other punters at the end of a track experience day and I've just driven a Lotus Elise for the first time. The instructor in front of us says something along the lines of: 'Congratulations, Dan! You're the driver of the day.' What he wanted to say was: 'Somebody has to win this baseball cap and it might as well be you.' What I heard was: 'Congratulations, Dan! You're well on your way to Formula 1.'

At some point my F1 prospects faded to dust, but the memory of that British Racing Green Elise is still perfectly formed. An Elise connects you to the road rather than isolating you from it; a mountain bike engages you with a downhill run in much the same way. A budget of £13,000 will buy a clean 111S, which has central locking, power windows, and additional sound deadening in a nod to daily usability, and 156bhp.

Caterham Seven

If the Elise is a tonic in this age of complexity, the Caterham Seven could just be a cure. It's not possible to strip anything more from the anatomy of a sports car without arriving at a single-seater racing car, which is exactly why the Seven will always be a firm favourite with this magazine. These cars are also the perfect entry point into trackdays and competitive motorsport.

It isn't just the driving experience that's unique: Caterhams also hold their value like nothing else. You will not struggle to spend £15,000 on a 13-year-old car, then, but that budget will afford you a well-maintained 140bhp Supersport with low miles. And, of course, when you come to sell it on you'll recover most of that initial outlay.

Vauxhall Monaro

And now for something completely different. Fun can take a great many forms in the world of the performance car and, in the case of the V8-powered Vauxhall Monaro, it generally involves a bootful of throttle, a hastily dumped clutch and enough tyre-smoke to ground BA's entire fleet for an afternoon.

Leggier examples can be picked up for less than £9000, which is a pretty cost-effective way into 5.7 litres. As Vince Miller (left) explains, few cars make you smile like a Vauxhall Monaro.

'TRIM THE FAT FROM ANY MODERN SUPERCAR AND EVENTUALLY YOU'LL BE LEFT WITH AN ELISE'



Above: a Caterham Seven is a great car in which to hone your driving skills. **Left:** the Lotus Elise is a similar proposition, only with added practicality



BIG THRILLS, LITTLE BILLS

by NICK TROTT

<£20k Retro curios



'IF YOU'RE BUYING AN EXTREMELY RARE CURIO, BE PREPARED TO SUFFER PARTS SHORTAGES'

Right: it's hard to believe that the diminutive Citroën Visa battled in Group B. **Far right:** Honda's CRX, which features a Kamm tail, if you're feeling generous



'I bought one'



Richard Lane, evo subeditor
Lancia Delta Integrale

'My Lancia [left] isn't so much a car I drive as somewhere I go to ruminate. Usually about motorsport, but also about how one engineers a gearbox to be so damned disobedient when engaging reverse and how I might evict the chinchillas that by aural indications have taken refuge in the dash.

'Then there's the anxiety. Why am I procrastinating Dinitrol? Why are the subframe bushes creaking? Differentials are complex, mysterious and can wear out; this car has three, all different types. And so on.

'The joke in Integrale circles is that you can urinate on the engine bay and not a drop of moisture hits the pavement. I haven't tried this, but I'm sure it's true. The car is multifarious, so chock full of hardware that even routine fixes become a long and sometimes expensive undertaking best left entirely to someone with, oh I don't know, half a lifetime's experience in such matters.

'And yet – this was always coming – a well maintained example is endlessly, scrumptiously, gloriously good fun. The snappy looks, oily aroma and earthy sensations are different to other cars I know. Right now an Integrale feels on the cusp of 1980s zeitgeist and modern driveability, which, I promise, is a good place to be.

'Blitzkrieg looks and perhaps the greatest palmarès of any homologation car in history make it a legend. Five doors and a small footprint make it useable. And the virginal steering feel? Well, I can't think of many cars that make something as direct as the original Focus RS feel like suet pudding.'

Tips

Don't let anyone tell you that your choice is weird, ugly or daft. In many ways it's better that they don't understand (personal bond, and all that). Also, if you're buying an extremely rare curio, be prepared to suffer parts shortages and a lifelong battle with rust. And while you'll get a huge return on your emotional investment, it's unlikely you'll receive a financial return. Still, don't let any of this put you off. Mine your memories and take the plunge. You won't regret it.

This category is all about enjoying those vehicles that tickle your nostalgia gland. That's why you might find the cars I've chosen here odd (or downright bizarre): they are personal choices. They evoke memories and feelings that I treasure, which I'm sure you'll agree is hard to put a price on.

Should you surrender to the algorithmic gods of the eBay 'saved search' and buy a retro curio? Of course you should. But don't get serious until you've acknowledged the two main pitfalls of buying such cars. Firstly, if you fall out of love with the car quickly you may struggle to move it on (that's the reason I've never bought a Visa Mille Pistes), and secondly, while a cut-price curio might be appealing, the car is likely to be hiding all sorts of latent mechanical pain.

Still, life's short, these cars are disappearing, and your memories can't die with them. So what are you waiting for?

Honda CRX 16v Mk2

Forget 205 and Golf GTIs – if you wanted sparkling three-door performance then the now criminally undervalued Honda CRX (above right) was king. You sat lower than in a hot hatch, it had a much better gearchange than its rivals and, best of all, you could regularly wind it round to over 7000rpm (8000rpm on the VTEC model) without fear of detonation. Squint and it also had a Kamm tail. Is there anything cooler?

The CRX 1.6i-16 weighs 900kg, has 130bhp and was – is – pure joy. Pure Honda. The VTEC model weighs 1025kg and has 150bhp for a power-to-weight ratio of 149bhp per ton.

As a 17-year-old in the early '90s, I ached for a CRX. My mate's dad had one. We'd take it out, giggling at the rev-ceiling and the grip it could muster from teeny tyres. The handling had no vices either – I've no doubt that if we had taken a 205 GTI on those clandestine drives we'd still be picking dash plastic from our teeth.

The Mk2 CRX legend was cemented by the fact that it was replaced by an absolute stinker: the bloated Mk3 CRX 'Del Sol'. Today, quality Mk2s can be had from £4000. Your partner won't get it, neither will your close (non-petrolhead) friends. But you'll experience

something that'll never be repeated, for no one since has built a tiny 'skateboard' Kamm-tail coupe with a screaming race-like engine. And with legislation as it is, no-one will.

Citroën Visa Mille Pistes

I accept that I'm possibly the only person in the world who desires a Citroën Visa Mille Pistes, and will understand if you skip to the next car. If you're still with me, here's the story.

In the '80s my dad had a Visa Super X, then a Visa GTI. He liked them because they weren't Golfs or Escorts or 205s. And they were cheaper. We roamed France, home to many a curio, in these Visas on holiday, and nothing was more curious to the ten-year-old me than the Mille Pistes – a four-wheel-drive, limited-run rally car based on the Visa. With mighty Weber carbs, 145bhp and 850kg, they must've been a hoot.

To me, that there was a pukka Group B version meant that we were only a couple steps removed (OK, perhaps more) from that era's most fabled form of motorsport. And that tends to have a lasting impression. These cars rarely come up for sale (only around 200 were built), and they can fetch over £20,000. There's one in the UK. I don't know where but I'd love to find it.

Lancia Delta Integrale

Hopefully I'll now regain some of my lost credibility, for who doesn't love an Integrale? I certainly do. Again, nostalgia plays a part. The era when road cars were rally cars (and vice versa) had a tremendous influence on my development as a petrolhead. That the greatest drivers were flinging about ostensible road cars on World Rally stages is how it should be.

The Integrale is not especially rare, but the experience it delivers certainly is. Sure, it's not fast, but there are few cars as willing to work with you to reach driving nirvana. The steering, in particular, really is something special.

Just over 44,000 Integrales were built. The steroidal Evo 2s tend to get all the attention, but I'm with evo's Richard Lane – the early eight-valvers are looking more desirable by the day. Especially at £15,000. They just seem to ooze class, but don't just take my word for it, read Richard's thoughts for yourself (see left).

A high-angle, wide shot of a mountain valley. A paved road winds through the middle ground, curving to the right. A river flows through the valley floor, its white water contrasting with the green grass. The mountainsides are covered in green vegetation and scattered evergreen trees. In the background, more mountain ranges are visible under a sky filled with heavy, grey clouds. The overall mood is dramatic and scenic.

NOT THE *STELVIO*

The new, 370bhp Spyder is the ultimate version of Porsche's already-brilliant Boxster. So what better open-top car in which to explore the lesser-travelled passes of the Alps?

by HENRY CATCHPOLE

PHOTOGRAPHY by ASTON PARROTT

INDICATE LEFT AND EASE the Spyder to a halt to wait for a gap in the traffic. The sun is scorching, and even though the double-bubble bodywork behind me seems to cocoon driver and passenger more than a normal Boxster's does, I can almost feel my arms browning.

We're on the outskirts of Bormio in northern Italy and the traffic coming towards me is descending the last few metres of one of the most famous roads in the world.

At 2757m it's not the highest paved pass in the Alps, and neither is it the highest road in the Alps. It is also frequently narrow, often crowded and occasionally shut for cyclists. Yet if you mention the greatest driving roads then its name always crops up: Stelvio.

Standing at the top, looking down the spectacularly hairpinned eastern side, it is easy to see why the Passo dello Stelvio holds such fascination. It is mesmerising and I'm not for a minute suggesting you shouldn't drive it. Yet just like Kaa's eyes in *The Jungle Book*, it's easy to become fixated on this one stretch of serpentine road to the exclusion of everything else in the area. And that's a shame, because as I'm about to discover, you could come to this small corner of the Alps, never set a tyre on the Stelvio and still drive some of the best roads in the world...

Finally the traffic clears and instead of driving up the Stelvio I turn off down the SS301 heading to the Passo del Foscagno. Yesterday, photographer Aston Parrott and I made the six-hour journey up from Tuscany where the launch of the new Porsche Boxster Spyder was taking place and we've promised to deliver the car back to Stuttgart, another six or so hours north of here, after the weekend. But for the next two days we're going to do some exploring.

We trundle through Molina and Premadio and then, glancing in the mirror, I see a dark green E36 M3 overtake a couple of cars with just enough room to spare. He slots back in with one car between us. There is a string of small villages along the valley leading to the start of the pass and for the next few miles he stays where he is, although the M3's left-hand headlight is constantly bobbing out from behind the XC90 in front of him as he looks for a chance to overtake. There is a campervan in front of us so I've got half an eye on an overtake myself and, as we leave San Carlo, the opportunity arises. With the 370bhp 3.8-litre flat-six punching us past our easy prey, I look in my door mirror to see that, sure enough, the BMW is taking its chance too, overtaking both cars to leave clear road between us.

The next few miles are fun. On a map you might dismiss the Foscagno for its apparent lack of interesting bends after the first three hairpins, but in reality it is a supremely challenging piece



*'THE SPYDER'S
3.8-LITRE
FLAT-SIX
PUNCHES US
PAST OUR
EASY PREY'*

Above: 310lb ft plus 265-section rear tyres (30mm narrower than the Cayman GT4's) make for easy oversteer.
Previous spread: the fabulous Flüela Pass



of road. Corner after corner is thrown at you, each one requiring second or third gear, which feels just perfect. It's fast but not crazy and the climb is gradual. Short straights give occasional respite and then the open-sided tunnels begin, flickering the view of the mountains like an early stop-motion film.

The M3 is never far away but I open enough of a gap to dispel any notions the driver might have had of overtaking. The Spyder is a joy to fling around and with the PASM set to Sport the car seems to have astonishingly little inertia in direction changes. Right follows left follows right so that the lateral G-forces never seem to abate, each side of your body leaning into the bolsters of the carbon-shelled bucket in turn.

The road gets faster once the trees recede and we near the top of the pass, but just as we're rounding a left-hander I notice some buildings

up ahead and slow down. The M3 flashes its headlights almost at the same instant, presumably as a warning, as the driver also backs off the speed. We trickle innocently up to what looks like a border crossing, which is odd, because unless I was driving a lot faster than I thought, I'm sure we're not near Switzerland quite yet. The uniformed sentry looks coolly at the Spyder from behind his shades and, with an almost imperceptible nod, ushers us through.

The signs on the other side are still Italian and nothing seems to have changed, but I pull over at the top of the pass to take in the view nonetheless. The M3 carries on with a friendly wave and someone that looks suspiciously like a 1990s Flavio Briatore at the wheel.

After a couple of photos, Aston and I potter down through a few wide hairpins before pulling into a petrol station that is surprisingly

busy. Who should be filling up at the pump in front, but none other than '90s Flavio complete with pristine white Mapei polo shirt. We shake hands, have a chat and he says we should drive the pass at night, when it's quiet. As he heads off, I turn my attention to the fuel pump that has been busily depositing superunleaded into the Spyder. It clicks off. The litres look correct but the price seems awfully cheap. I wander into the small shop to pay and the chocolate seems mouth-wateringly good value too. What happened when we went past the border crossing was that we arrived in the small commune of Livigno, which is a duty-free region of Italy. Apparently income tax is still payable, so it's not technically a tax haven, but since the middle of the 19th century the government has given the region a tax break because the area was historically so poor



*'OPEN-SIDED TUNNELS
FLICKER THE VIEW OF
THE MOUNTAINS LIKE A
STOP-MOTION FILM'*

and difficult to reach during winter that they wanted to encourage people to live there.

The road winds on past various picturesque villages with silent ski lifts running up verdant slopes. It really does give you the feeling that you're hidden away up in the mountains. We skirt around Livigno itself and follow the road alongside the shores of the beautiful Lago di Livigno, which, despite the name, is actually a reservoir, as the huge dam at the end confirms. This is where we cross into Switzerland and, as you might expect, there is a toll to do so, although it's not actually levied by the Swiss but a private company. This is because the company that built the dam also built a tunnel through the mountainside to transport building materials from Switzerland. In 1968, after the dam was complete, the Munt la Schera tunnel was opened for public use. It's two miles long but only one lane wide and so the flow is switched every 15 minutes. It's also quite a claustrophobic space once you're inside and unable to see natural light, but with the roof down and a sports exhaust on hand to fire some aural flat-six goodness at the bare rock walls, it's also an enjoyable couple of miles underneath the mountains.

The reward for reaching the other side is tarmac of an entirely smoother quality. It's relatively wide too, and the temptation to just scythe along this silky surface is almost too much, but we're in Switzerland so I resist (most of the time) as I'm keen to reach our ultimate aim for the day. If I turn left in Zernez, I could reach the pretty Albula Pass, but we're going right and then a few miles later left just as we come into Susch, which leads us onto the magnificent Flüela Pass.

Initially the climb through the trees is steep, with switchbacks piled on top of one another. With nearly as much power and torque as the Cayman GT4 but narrower rear tyres, the Spyder is happy to indulge in a bit of oversteer round the hairpins, but the car feels even more at home as the gradient eases and we emerge onto the spectacular uplands of the Flüela. Great shafts of late afternoon sun are breaking through the clouds and lighting the summit. Unlike the constricted first part of the climb, the road can roam free up here, picking a meandering path through the open landscape, crossing a stream here, winding round an outcrop there. This huge grassy bowl is entirely empty of other cars too, so I feel happy to let the Spyder attack it at something nearer full tilt.

The handling balance on the sports suspension is just wonderful, as it is in the lesser Boxster GTS. But where the Spyder takes a step forward is the steering, which is slightly quicker and accessed via the smaller, 360mm-diameter wheel from the GT3 RS. Up here you can really appreciate the extra urge of the 364cc-bigger

*'THE ROAD
CAN ROAM
FREE UP HERE,
PICKING A
MEANDERING
PATH
THROUGH
THE OPEN
LANDSCAPE'*



motor too, which needs to be left to rev well beyond 5000rpm to fully come alive. That sounds easy enough, but with the Boxster's relatively tall gearing it requires a reasonable amount of room to explore the upper reaches of each ratio.

The advantage of slightly rangy ratios is that you get a few moments longer between shifts to enjoy the morphing of the sound and delivery of the naturally aspirated engine as it crescendos towards its red line. Out of a hairpin in second, there is the deep, almost rough burble at low revs, then it smoothes out as the revs rise, the note rising an octave and taking on a more mournful edge as it does so, before brightening and ripping angrily up towards the red line as you really feel the push in the back. Of course, if you lift off the throttle with the sports exhaust in its louder mode then you get a small volley of explosions like a small live firing exercise is

taking place in the rear boot.

Cattle roam the pastures and as the Boxster goes hammering past, a strange, discordant jangling from the cowbells mingles with the exhaust note entering the open cockpit. It's made weirder still by the Doppler effect distorting the campanological clanking as it comes and goes. From the Flüela's summit at 2383m, the road on the far side – towards Davos – looks even more inviting. The gradient clearly isn't as steep and the road is a terrific mixture of fast and slow, with well-sighted corners almost all the way. Moments later I'm into a particularly good downhill stretch where the Spyder feels totally at home jinking back and forth through the linked direction changes between the flower-strewn verges. If I was travelling out to the Stelvio, this is the route I'd take.

Aston spends a few hours hiking up to the tops of various peaks to get some big landscapes

in his lenses, and then with the sun already dipping behind the mountains we turn and head back the way we've come. With the views now receding into the darkness, I concentrate even more on what the road is doing and it really does make for a fantastic drive. Even on the stretches where I have to back right off, I've still got the six-speed manual to play with and the perfectly weighted pedals to enjoy. Showers are moving in and so we have to stop and put the roof up (it takes about a minute once you've got it sussed). Even then, the thinner canvas means that although you're totally protected from the elements, there is more noise than normal filtering through the cabin, so you don't feel totally shut off from the world outside.

We stop at a Livigno pub. It seems to do just three dishes. The starter is a massive pile of monkey nuts, which are deposited on the table top in their shells. Then, although the menu hints



Below left: late-night top-up before another run over the Foscagno Pass. **Opposite page:** Gavia Pass is a perfect playground for the Spyder. **Bottom left:** the most expensive Boxster borrows its seats from the 918 Spyder hypercar



at a wide range of main dishes, you actually just have the choice of a large piece of chicken or an even larger steak. It suits us just fine. Afterwards we head out for a run over the Foscagno in the dark – it's as good as Flavio said it would be – before getting to bed as early as we can.

CREEPING OUT OF THE HOTEL AT 4.15am the following morning is not really something I feel like doing. It's clearly not something the hotel is too keen on either, as they've locked the doors. All of them. Eventually, just as we're about to climb out of a slightly precarious window, the owner blearily emerges and lets us out before stomping back to bed. The Spyder would have probably woken him up anyway. By 4.30am we're driving through the sleeping streets of Bormio. This time we bear right in the middle of town, following signs for Santa Caterina di Valfurva. Through the subsequent



villages the road is already narrower than anything we encountered yesterday, outside of the tunnel. Away from human habitation, pairs of glowing eyes keep catching the headlights as we disturb the nocturnal wildlife going about its business. On the other side of Santa Caterina the road seems to narrow even further and the hairpins begin. Ten sinewy switchbacks follow in quick succession but the road certainly doesn't run straight between them, the camber dipping this way then that as the headlights chase the tarmac weaving through the trees. It's testament to the Spyder's nimbleness that it can tackle the road at pace and not feel too large, and the more direct steering is definitely a help in picking a line with what little room is available between rocks and drops.

Once the hairpins stop, so do the trees, and with the sky lightening above we find ourselves on a ledge looking out at the jagged blue silhouettes of the mountains in the pre-dawn. Rounding a large right-hand bend that seems to teeter on the edge of oblivion, the road then begins to unfurl, running up the side of the valley with the drop on the left getting paradoxically shallower the higher we go.

Much as I didn't want to drag my tired body and foggy head out of bed in the middle of the night, there is no doubt now that it was worth it. Standing, looking out on the mountains, the air still, the light soft, it feels utterly magical. To have this much natural beauty to ourselves seems like such an incredible privilege that you feel almost like it shouldn't be allowed. We regularly get up before the first sparrow has broken wind in order to have cameras and cars in place for the beautiful light around sunrise, but even if you're not attempting photographic perfection, I urge you to make the effort.

The tarmac up here is cracked and buckled, ravaged by the ice of winter, but the Spyder copes well, never catching its new, more prominent nose. A turquoise lake and a couple of large buildings mark the 2652m summit of the Gavia Pass, but the restaurant won't be open for coffee for a couple of hours yet, so I carry on over the top. The southern side begins descending gently, but then abruptly reaches the top of a craggy wall from whence you can see the road in the distance. It's no more than a thin crease in the mountainside.

It feels wonderfully wild and remote up here. With no one around and the haggard condition of the tarmac, it seems like we've discovered an abandoned pass through the mountains, something that is gradually losing a battle against natural entropy as it's consumed by the landscape. Where the ladder of hairpins on the first part of the Flüela felt like a finely planned feat of engineering, this bit of the Gavia looks like little more than a lightly sealed goat path scrabbling precariously down the mountain.



Aston makes the most of the pass's emptiness for the next couple of hours, then we have a strongly caffeinated breakfast up at the top. I then decide that in the spirit of exploration I should follow the route of the Gavia all the way down to its base at Ponte di Legno. This is something of a mistake. First you descend through lush alpine pasture and then, as you go lower still, the trees close in. And so do the edges of the road. I'm not sure I've ever driven on such a narrow road. If I have it will have been in Ireland or Cornwall and had hedges on either side, which, although a danger to wing mirrors, is less intimidating than a fatal drop. It gets worse. Other traffic is now appearing. Just

dribs and drabs, but that's all it takes. Some of it is two-wheeled, which is manageable, but cars are another matter. Potential passing places are few and far between and the only thing more nerve-racking than going forwards is reversing back...

Eventually I reach the bottom, fully aware that I will have to make the return journey. But at least the sun's out, and I've got all afternoon to play on the Gavia.

I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE AND GO HOME the following morning, but if we have to, the Umbrail Pass is a pretty good way to go. We have to travel up the western side of the Stelvio

*'TO HAVE THIS MUCH
NATURAL BEAUTY TO
OURSELVES SEEMS LIKE SUCH
AN INCREDIBLE PRIVILEGE'*



in order to get there because the Umbrail is in fact the oft-overlooked third branch of the Stelvio. There is a good reason for it having been the poor cousin: it was only fully asphalted this year. As you reach the buildings just below the Stelvio's summit you turn left and then you're instantly across the border into Switzerland. As you would expect, the freshly laid Swiss tarmac is beautiful and, at least in number, the staggering 35 switchbacks on the way down to Santa Maria Val Müstair are arguably even more impressive than anything in Italy.

It doesn't have quite the expansive scale of the Stelvio, but there is a jewel-like quality to the

PORSCHE BOXSTER SPYDER

Engine Flat-six, 3800cc
Power 370bhp @ 6700rpm
Torque 310lb ft @ 4750-6000rpm
Weight 1315kg
Power-to-weight 286bhp/ton
0-62mph 4.5sec (claimed)
Top speed 180mph (claimed)
Price £60,459

evo rating: ★★★★★

way the Umbrail tumbles down from the ridge into a relatively confined space. The Boxster sounds particularly wonderful this morning, too; the noise of the flat-six seemingly captured in this crook of the mountains.

In the same way that the Umbrail or the Gavia or the Flüela might not have the reputation of the Stelvio, it seems easy to forget the Boxster Spyder in all the hype around the Cayman GT4. But although it doesn't have quite the aggression and tactility of the GT4, on a day like today, roof down, surrounded by mountains on an empty, newly surfaced pass, the Spyder nonetheless feels pretty much spot on. ☒

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McLAREN 650S SPIDER // RENAULTSPORT MÉGANE 275 TROPHY // RANGE ROVER SPORT //
PORSCHÉ 996 GT2 // PORSCHÉ 911 SC // SEAT LEON ST CUPRA 280 // AUDI S1 // BMW 2002

Ford Focus ST Diesel

NEW ARRIVAL

A diesel estate on the Fast Fleet? Yes, really. Here's why...

A GREY DIESEL ESTATE is not the first car that springs to mind when you think of **evo's** Fast Fleet. Glance over these pages and you'll see 911s, 458s and Murciélagos share the car park with Caterhams, Cupras and MX-5s. And the odd pick-up truck. But way back in the early part of 2015 a grey, diesel Focus ST estate arrived at **evo** for a couple of days for evaluation, and pretty much all who drove it felt it was better than the petrol hatch that had failed to impress in issue 207's group test, so we asked Ford if we could run one long-term. As you can see, they said yes.

We were free to choose the spec

– a job that fell to website editor Hunter Skipworth, who did his best impression of a child in a sweet shop and managed to order a £29,470 Ford Focus (the list price for this ST-3 Estate is £27,395). The biggest expense was £525 on the Blind Spot Information System (BLIS), followed by £450 on an ST Style pack that replaces the standard 18-inch Rock wheels with a set an inch bigger and also adds a tint to the rear windows. Another £450 was spent on Ford's Driver Assistance Pack (Active City Stop, Lane Departure Warning, Lane Keeping Aid, Traffic Sign Recognition, Drive Alert and Auto High Beam) and £400 on a Premium Sync2

DAB navigation system with no fewer than ten Sony speakers and a subwoofer. A rear-view camera accounted for another £165, and £85 was spent on door edge protectors. Being an ST-3, standard kit is already generous and includes auto bi-xenon headlights, heated and electric driver and passenger seats, and enhanced torque vectoring.

Arriving with barely 50 miles on its odometer, and being a diesel, our ST's 182bhp EcoBoost engine felt tighter than a freelance writer ordering a round of drinks. That early test car, which had impressed with its punchy mid-range (295lb ft of torque from 2000rpm) and un-



Right: diesel ST engine is 65bhp down on the petrol, but has 30lb ft more torque. **Below:** leather seats come as part of the ST-3 trim level



'This generation of Focus ST still has a naturally talented chassis'

diesel-like responses, had covered nearly 5000 miles, so we'll give our fletcher a month or two before we pass judgement on its powertrain.

Early thoughts, however, can't ignore those optional 19-inch wheels, or more specifically their effect on the ride. While they fill the arches and are a good match for the Focus's taut bodylines, imperfections in the road surface make themselves known more often than I would like. It doesn't jar like my old WRX STI did and neither is it a constant irritation, but when the surface begins to break up, so too does the ride. If I can get the 19s switched without Hunter noticing, the problem will be solved. Wheel size apart, this generation of Focus ST still has a naturally talented

chassis, and one that feels like it will do a very good job of hiding the estate car body it's carrying.

Inside, the Recaros get a firm grip on your torso, the infotainment system is beyond compare to the system in our recently departed Fiesta ST and the interior quality is yet another step on for Ford.

I won't be the long-term custodian of this ST, but while I await the arrival of my new Fast Fleeter I'll have its keys to save me commuting 200 miles a day in our Caterham. As a daily the Focus has fitted seamlessly into my life – endlessly spent on motorways and finding interesting routes to avoid said motorways – but its remit is to deliver thrills, and it has 12 months to demonstrate to me and the rest of us how to do just that. ✕

Stuart Gallagher
(@stuartg917)

Date acquired	August 2015
Total mileage	2014
Mileage this month	1965
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	42.4



Vauxhall Corsa VXR

There's a lot to like about our 202bhp junior hot hatch, but there's also a big compromise

THERE'S A PARTICULARLY bad stretch of road just around the corner from the *evo* office that has an incredible knack for bringing out the very worst in a car's ride. It has become the undoing of our Corsa VXR, exposing the serious weakness that is its ride quality.

Quite frankly, the little Vauxhall is too stiff. I recently went down this same bumpy road with road test editor Dan Prosser in a Lamborghini Aventador SV, and the ultra-hardcore, low-slung Italian supercar smothered the surface better than our VXR, even with its awful fixed-back carbonfibre seats.

The more time I spend in the

Corsa, the more polarising a car it becomes. The Koni FSD dampers that come as part of the optional, £2400 Performance Pack just don't appear to be set up for British B-roads. That's a shame, because the excellent Drexler limited-slip differential and Michelin Pilot Super Sport tyres are also included in the pack and there's no way to option them separately from the stiffer damping setup.

Nonetheless, the Corsa is very clearly a car that likes to be properly thrashed. I've yet to try it on track, but I imagine the experience will see me appreciating the dampers' firmer control. But on the road, it's just the wrong side of firm.

I do miss the VXR when I don't drive it, though. There's always been something great about the more manic side of junior hot hatches and our little Corsa has that personality in spades. As I'm a London-dweller, the compact size of the VXR is also proving useful; 202bhp, sticky tyres and a darty front end make it the ideal vehicle for nipping in and out of traffic. Just



'The more time I spend in the Corsa, the more polarising a car it becomes'

don't go over any speed humps at more than a snail's pace...

The interior, which is a big improvement over the previous-gen car's, is also growing on me. The satnav is awful, but the Recaro driver's seat is still my favourite place to sit in the hot hatch segment.

It's early days yet, but I genuinely can't wait to get the Corsa out on track. I imagine a few laps at Bedford Autodrome will see me putting up with my bumpy commute home. ☒

Hunter Skipworth
(@HunterSkipworth)

Date acquired	July 2015
Total mileage	5877
Mileage this month	950
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	30.8

Caterham Seven 420R

Keen to hone his driving skills, our website editor gets some training in the perfect car for the job

U NSURPRISINGLY, sending a stupidly expensive car sideways on a track is something that only a select few at **evo** are trusted to do. A recent ride with Jethro in a 458 Speciale taught me that I have a long way to go to even get close to his level of skill.

As such, it was time for some lessons, so the Caterham and Corsa VXR (left) made the trip to CAT Driver Training at Millbrook Proving Ground for two days of intensive road and track tuition with driving guru Colin Hoad.

The first day was spent on the road in the VXR, with Colin taking every single aspect of my driving technique to pieces. The result was a much safer and quicker

Hunter. If you'd like to know how this was achieved, you can read all about the training on evo.co.uk.

Day two was spent largely at Millbrook. Everything I had learned the day before was taken up a notch, and with more space to play with I had more scope for getting it wrong and then improving.

Threshold and trail braking, as well as variations on the correct line and an in-depth analysis of car control across front-, mid- and rear-engined vehicles was the order of the day. This all built up to the chance to learn to drift properly in the Caterham.

My first piece of advice is that if you want to do this kind of thing, make sure you are somewhere such as Millbrook and with

someone like CAT. It took me a while, but the bonkers power-to-weight ratio of the 420R, coupled with hammering rain, meant I had the 420R breaking traction quite nicely. It's a truly sublime learning tool, with every aspect of control managed by the driver alone.

For those interested in improving their driving with Colin, head to catdrivertraining.co.uk. The course comes recommended, no matter what your skill level. ☒

Hunter Skipworth
(@HunterSkipworth)

Date acquired	August 2015
Total mileage	2667
Mileage this month	832
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	35.6





McLaren 650S Spider

No regrets for SSO as he settles in with his latest open-top British supercar

WHILE THE 650S SPIDER got a thorough workout in its first month, during the second it has mostly seen weekend duty. And, as a weekend warrior, it has turned in some impressive performances.

Multiple short trips and crawling around at less than jogging speeds do not seem to bother it in the least, and with the front-end lift activated,

speed bumps and parking-lot ramps have so far been entirely scrape-free experiences.

With temperatures in my part of the US currently in the brain-baking high-30s, the roof has stayed firmly shut during the past month. As an occupant with the roof closed, it is nearly impossible to tell the difference between the Coupe and the Spider. Where I *am* seeing a real difference between this and my old 12C, meanwhile, is in the ride quality. The 650S is far more at ease on less-than-stellar surfaces yet doesn't lose any sense of attachment to the road. Impressively, it feels sharper than the 12C did, too, which makes it a more rewarding car to drive.

Although I'm still in the very early days of getting to know the 650S, I'm getting the impression that it also gives the driver a bit more freedom than the 12C does when you select the stability control's more lenient

'It can be quite hard not to leave everyone else as tiny specs in your mirrors...'

settings. I am not sure yet if this is the tyres or the programming, but either way, it works. The extra torque from the twin-turbocharged V8 is also noticeable and it can be quite hard not to leave everyone else as tiny specs in your mirrors when pulling away from the lights. The balance is also superb and it's very easy to place the car on the road.

For reasons I am not quite sure of yet, the 650S does attract a bit more attention than the 12C did. My

guess is that the more aggressive-looking front end is the culprit. Most strangers that do strike up a conversation have heard of McLaren but have never seen one of its road cars before. One guy insisted that the 650S must be Italian, even if it was a McLaren, because 'the British only make big luxury cars'. Overall, 90 per cent of comments are positive.

Two months in and so far I have zero regrets on making the switch to the 650S. I have yet to find any area where it comes up short against its predecessor. In fact, even the IRIS infotainment system has worked well. So far. ✕

Secret Supercar Owner
(@SupercarOwner)

Date acquired	July 2015
Total mileage	685
Mileage this month	55
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	11

Mini John Cooper Works

Enjoy an interior that's jam-packed with surprise-and-delight features? Try a Mini, says Eveleigh

SOME HAVE SAID THE new Mini's interior 'goes too far', but, honestly, I don't see that. I see a neat evolution of the last-gen Mini's cabin, with nicer materials and fewer creaky plastic parts. It's even become more conventional in some respects. The window switches have moved to the doors from the row of toggles on the centre console, for example – all the better for passengers unfamiliar with the car.

For the driver, meanwhile, well-thought-out features abound. Take the driving modes switch, which takes the form of a collar around the base of the gear selector. On first acquaintance you think: why not just have a button? But soon you realise that the collar falls effortlessly to hand without you having to take your eyes off the road, a nudge right or left then shifting you up and down the modes. It's second only to BMW's 'M' mode steering-wheel buttons for ease and speed of use.

Voice recognition that can comprehend even the weirdest band, album and track names saves lots of distracting scrolling through my iPod's contents. Then there are the six numbered buttons beneath the nav screen. Radio

presets? If you like, but they can also be set as shortcuts for *anything* in the infotainment system: the trip computer, the satnav map, the power and torque display... whatever you fancy.

Months in, I'm still finding new features, such as the way you can enter satnav destinations by writing the letters with your fingertip on the top of the infotainment dial, or the 'auxiliary ventilation' option that allows you to set a timer to cool the cabin ready for your arrival on a summer's morning, or the self-parking function – guaranteed to impress anyone who has never seen such witchcraft before.

The only thing I don't like inside the JCW is the central armrest, which is either in the way of the handbrake or, if I swing it up and back, in the way of my elbow. But that small niggle aside, I reckon you can forget your S-classes and Rolls-Royces: if you want an interior that's really had some thought put into it, look no further than a Mini. **x**

Ian Eveleigh

Date acquired	May 2015
Total mileage	7047
Mileage this month	1391
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	35.4



Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy

Better placed to judge than most, Meaden counters the perception of Renault build quality

A AS I WRITE, THE MÉGANE is due to go for a service, which has caused me to reflect upon something that has vexed me for a while. I've been fortunate to have had a succession of Renaultsport long-termers over the years. A run of front-drive fun that goes back to the original Renaultsport Clio 172, in fact. As you might imagine, they've all been driven hard on road and track, so every mile is a proper test of dynamic and structural integrity.

I mention this only for context, because during my periods as a Renaultsport 'owner', I've found it strange that although there's generally never any doubt that the cars are great to drive, people often suck through their teeth at a perceived lack of build quality and reliability. I've never really understood this. In the many tens of thousands of miles I've lived with Renaultsport products, I've always found them to be tough, dependable cars. They just seem to soak up punishment.

My previous Mégane (an early 250 Cup) felt as mechanically fresh and strong at the end of the 12-month

loan period as it did at the start, and this 275 Trophy is proving to be the same. If anything, the engine and gearbox feel better now than they did on delivery. The dashboard has collected an annoying scuff above the glovebox, and the Alcantara wheel is showing signs of sweat and grime build-up on the right-hand side (you do need to hang on tight sometimes!), but otherwise the interior is in excellent nick.

The exterior is proving equally durable. There are a few stone chips on the nose, but with long motorway runs also a big part of the Trophy's life, that's inevitable, sadly. Even the black painted wheels – so often a hotspot for chips and abrasions – look glossy and fresh.

In short, the Trophy is wearing well. It goes back to Renault in three months. Whoever buys it is going to get a terrific car. **x**

Richard Meaden
(@DickieMeaden)

Date acquired	November 2014
Total mileage	13,922
Mileage this month	1397
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	30.1

Range Rover Sport SDV8

Ranulph Trott embarks on a not-so-treacherous journey to the south of France in **evo's** hard-working SUV



B BACK IN THE '80s, MY MUM and dad took my sister and me on holiday to the south of France every year. I have fond memories of those trips: skimming through France, pretending to be asleep but secretly looking out the window just in case I could spot an Alpine A310, Citroën Visa Chrono or other such curio. One year dad drove us into Monte Carlo and I spotted Walter Wolf's black Countach, which turned me inside-out with excitement.

Being a bit of a non-conformist, Dad never owned 'ordinary' cars, so the journeys were carried out in machinery such as Citroën's GSA Pallas, Visa Super X and Visa GTI. Or, in other words, small, tinny things completely unsuited to the journey. Thirty years later I found myself loading luggage and my own kids into a car for a similar trip. Within seconds, the Range Rover Sport was overflowing with stuff. I couldn't believe it. What's changed in three decades that means a car with a

13-square-metre footprint and a 489-litre boot isn't big enough? I asked my wife the same question, and my accusational tone didn't go down too well...

Let's not beat around the bush: the Sport was magnificent on the journey to the south of France. The radar cruise control, the ride comfort, the range (around 600 miles), the fuel consumption (30.5mpg over 2000 miles) – everything. On the last point, I spent £392 on diesel – cheap considering we travelled four-up in comfort exceeding that of a Learjet.

Driver (or passenger) fatigue never arose, every single one of the car's countless complex systems worked faultlessly, and the Sport's overall aura of indomitability was all-encompassing.

There is, however, a 'but'. Those trips as a kid fired a life-long obsession with driving, with adventure and with cars. I knew, even as a six-year-old, that our holidays were slightly

unconventional. I vaguely remember friends talking about flying Dan-Air on their holidays, and wondering why we were taking two days to drive to the south of France, but I wouldn't have traded places. I get a lump in my throat today thinking back on those memories.

On our holiday this year, I felt slightly guilty that I couldn't recreate that sense of adventure for my own kids. I honestly don't think they realised that they travelled over 2000 miles in the back of the car, so serenely did those miles slip by.

On the flip side, they were safe, comfortable, watched DVDs, slept in comfort, were shaded from the sun by tinted glass, probably never even heard the V8 turbodiesel engine, and were cooled by a quite brilliant climate-control system. And what price do you put on that?

To conclude, I honestly can't think of another vehicle on the planet more suited to the journey, but did it feel like an adventure? No. ☒

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

'The fuel bill was cheap considering that we travelled four-up in comfort exceeding that of a Learjet'

Date acquired	December 2014
Total mileage	21,127
Mileage this month	2354
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	30.5

Porsche 996 GT2

Italian tyres for a German supercar as Trott's GT2 becomes his daily driver... for now

HURRAH! THE GT2 HAS a fresh set of tyres fitted and it's been my daily driver since I returned from my hols (see opposite). I must admit, the Porsche felt shockingly quick the first time I gave it the full beans after five weeks in the Range.

To recap, finding tyres for the GT2 was proving frustrating. All four needed replacing (the car had been in storage on an old set for a couple of years and I didn't like the look of the sidewalls), but I couldn't find any in the required sizes.

Eventually, Pirelli came good with a set of P Zero Rosso Asimmetrico tyres in the appropriate 235/40 ZR18 (front) and 315/30 ZR18 (rear) sizes and with the relevant Porsche 'N'

rating. The Rosso isn't a track-orientated tyre, but will suit the GT2 (and me) fine for the road-focused driving ahead. The GT2 will go on track, just not yet.

What does 'Asimmetrico' mean? You've probably guessed – it means the tread pattern is asymmetrical. The outer edges are less 'patterned' than the inner, which supposedly yields improvements in lateral rigidity, water expulsion and high-speed grip. I look forward to finding out. Well, perhaps not the watery bit...

The Pirelli Performance Centre at STS Tyre Pros in Hemel Hempstead fitted the rubber and did a solid, conscientious job. I have to admit, there was no way I was going to let any old tyre-fitter loose on the GT2's rims. Knowing that a pukka Pirelli Performance Centre was doing the work gave real peace of mind (and still does).

During the fitting, the staff invited me to check the rims and the weight placement, and kept me informed throughout. They also advised me to recheck the torque of the wheel nuts after 50 miles, and offered to do the check

themselves or at another PPC. Gold-star service, in other words.

The car is so hunkered down at the back that you don't get a good glimpse of the tyres like you do with, say, a Countach. But when the wheels were removed during the fitting, the sheer size of the rubber elicited boyish giggles – at least from photographer Aston Parrott and me. A 315mm section width doesn't look overly massive on taller tyres, but on 18-inch rims it looks comically big.

So, the GT2 is fitted with some new boots and I'm finally, *finally* exploring its performance. Yes it's quick (properly quick), but I'm also discovering a car that's dripping with that intangible 'special' feeling. There really is something about the GT2. I've not quite put my finger on it yet, but I look forward to finding out. ☒

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	June 2015
Total mileage	26,244
Mileage this month	209
Costs this month	£698 tyres (£223 rear, £126 front)
mpg this month	23.0



Above: 600-mile range makes for five kids' movies back-to-back – a luxury a young Trott didn't have in the back of his dad's Citroëns



Far left: having the wheels removed provided an opportunity to get a proper look at the carbon ceramic brakes. **Left and below:** balancing and fitting the new rubber



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Porsche 911 SC

First it was the body, then it was the chassis, now it's the engine. Trott fears the worst after a drop in performance



D DO YOU EVER GET THAT feeling, when you've owned a car for a long time, that you can somehow 'read' small changes in its behaviour and condition? Sometimes you can feel minute performance differences, perhaps related to atmospheric changes. Other times you sense a tyre has dropped pressure and discover that it indeed has, but only by a tiny amount. It's weird, but I'm sure you know what I mean.

So, I was driving the SC and it just didn't feel right. It was down on power, but not all the time, and not always in the same place in the rev range. Otherwise, the car drove as well as ever: the gearbox was good, there was no smoke, no oil leaks, no odd noises or anything like that.

I took the car to specialist RPM Technik. If it turned out to be nothing, I'd have spent a few quid and come across like a paranoid wally, but so be it. Indeed, I was hoping for that. A bit of embarrassment would be preferable

to a big bill, especially having just spent my pension on the 996 GT2 (see page 141).

A few days later I received a call from Ollie at RPM: 'It could be a big bill, Nick.' Oh. Flipping. Heck. Ollie explained that they had compression-tested the cylinders and one was showing a big loss. 'It's more than likely a bent valve, but we won't know until we strip it down.'

My instinct had been right, but I wish it hadn't. In the back of my mind was the memory of a fluffed downshift at an *evo* track evening. Was that the cause? I'll never know.

A full strip-down and rebuild will cost more than £2500 – and that's without parts. Still, with the engine in bits, it would be rude not to tickle it, right?

Nick Trott (@evoNickTrott)

Date acquired	March 2014
Total mileage	90,993
Mileage this month	375
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	n/a

Volkswagen Amarok

Volkswagen Amarok

Our pickup gets sidelined for a special trip to the Isle of Skye using another steed from the VW stable

D DESPITE THE BOND EVO subeditor Richard Lane forged with my Amarok pickup during a trip to Italy earlier this year, I had other plans for my (very late) summer getaway.

California. No, not that one, the German one. An adventure to the Isle of Skye with a photographer mate of mine was kindly facilitated by Volkswagen UK as I managed to borrow a California camper for the trip. *evo* ran a California on the Fast Fleet a couple of years ago and, despite taking it home once or twice, I ended up kicking myself for not using it more. It was the perfect road-trip vehicle.

The latest T6 version has just about everything you could possibly want for a few days of getting lost around, well, anywhere. There's an auxiliary heater, a gas cooker, a fridge-freezer, two double-ish beds

and even a kitchen sink (yes, really). There's more: a sturdy awning, a pullout table with chairs and, amazingly, wardrobe space. All it's missing is a shower and a sh... loo. Not bad for a jazzed up Transporter.

Propulsion? A 201bhp 2-litre TSI engine with a super-slick seven-speed DSG gearbox. Scotland was riddled with campers and our Cali left nearly all of them in its wake.

We decided not to park up among others at the many caravan parks dotted around the Highlands and instead put the Cali to the test by camping wild each night. This turned out to be a superb decision: on our second night we were graced by the aurora borealis. The light show lasted for a couple of hours and was the absolute highlight of the trip.

The California T6 can cost north of £50,000 but it has me convinced of its value. Not very *evo*, I know,



Above: the aurora borealis and a California T6. Riley was hugely impressed by both

but in terms of sheer adventure... Pitching up wherever you want with the luxuries of home makes the Cali irresistible for people who love to get away from it all. But now it's back to reality, and the hard-working 'Rok.

Sam Riley (@samgriley)

Date acquired	March 2015
Total mileage	9332
Mileage this month	198
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	27.5

SEAT Leon ST Cupra 280

Our fast estate heads to the Isle of Man to go Lambo chasing



R READING OUT-OF-DATE gadget magazines and drinking terrible coffee for nearly three hours while my local SEAT dealer replaces a flat tyre is, unsurprisingly, not my favourite way to start my day.

It did, however, mean the Leon could now exceed the 50mph I had been limited to since a puncture on a soaking M1. (Spacesavers, eh?) The next job was to load it up with all my photography equipment and head to Liverpool, where features editor Henry Catchpole and road test

editor Dan Prosser were catching a ferry to the Isle of Man.

Liverpool is a bit of a schlep from our office in Northants. What made it easier was the SEAT's dynamic cruise control, which enables you to set a distance and 'lock on' to the car in front. Ergo, no need to touch the pedals for much of the journey.

At the ferry terminal I finally saw the car I'd be stalking for the next couple of days: a Lamborghini Aventador SV. It's one aggressive-looking beast; the sharp lines and wide body making it seem as if

Optimus Prime has landed.

Two movies and a posh ham sandwich later, we arrived on Man and didn't waste any time parking up the Lamborghini and jumping in the SEAT for a recce around the island. The estate can easily hold five adults (or in our case three excited schoolboys and a stepladder).

Over the next couple of days the Cupra became Prosser's world as he chauffeured me to different locations. The only time he left the SEAT, in fact, was to get a signal for his worsening addiction to Tinder.

Fast, comfortable and secure, the Cupra performed perfectly, and that's no exaggeration. As for journey home, luckily for me the Cupra's seats are heated, cushioned and will not break your back like the carbon shells bolted into the Aventador SV do... **X**

Aston Parrott (@AstonParrott)

Date acquired	May 2015
Total mileage	9934
Mileage this month	1446
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	33.1

Audi S1

Bovingdon rescues the S1 from his **evo** colleagues



I I'D SEEN HIDE NOR HAIR of the S1 for the best part of five weeks until just a few days ago. I'd dropped it at **evo** HQ before heading off on holiday for a week and then every

time I returned to the office it was away with Henry or film-maker Sam Riley. It's one of those cars that gets snaffled up quickly. However, finally it's back in my possession and, from the Planet Rock selection on the

radio, I suspect production editor Ian Eveleigh was the last to enjoy it.

It's been fun reacquainting myself with the S1 and it took barely a mile to appreciate once again its combination of supreme quality and slightly crazed big engine/little car dynamics. The tyres are looking pretty ragged now after a couple of **evo** track evenings and that only adds to the sense that the chassis can only just contain the 273lb ft.

Traction is superb, of course, but the front end now weaves around under hard acceleration much more than when it had fresh rubber. I quite like the sense that it's working so hard to transmit all that power.

I've also played around with the Drive Select system again. There are three settings – Efficiency, Auto and

Dynamic – acting on steering weight, throttle response and the magnetic dampers. I experimented before and settled on Dynamic, but there's no question the car rides with a little more fluency in Auto. It's a shame there's no 'Individual' setting as there is on other Audis, as I'd like to keep Dynamic's heavier and more consistent steering weight but dial back the dampers a bit for everyday driving. But that's a small gripe; the S1 continues to beguile. **X**

Jethro Bovingdon
(@JethroBovingdon)

Date acquired	December 2014
Total mileage	14,268
Mileage this month	1788
Costs this month	£0
mpg this month	28.8

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BMW 2002

Shell restoration is not a task to be undertaken lightly, as Beaumont discovers with his classic BMW coupe

Once all the welding was done on my 2002, I thought it would be ready for painting. A bit of primer, rub it down and then cover it in blue.

I was being naive. Or perhaps – no, actually, *definitely* – my own standards for painting aren't even in the same league as Shane's at Faircharm Restorations...

Once the body was prepped and still on its rotating spit, the interior, inside of the boot, the underside and the engine bay were coated in blue epoxy primer, which has a high zinc content and so has anti-corrosion properties. Then all the seams had a bead of sealer run over them. The underside was done relatively roughly as that was then coated with rubbery, protective sealer spray (a better, more durable version of the old stone chip coating), which covered anything messy looking. Everywhere else had the seam sealer hand-applied between two strips of masking tape, so both edges were straight and neat. Even at this early stage a bit of the final colour did go

on: three coats of gloss in the engine bay (after some high-build primer) and on the underside (over the special sealer spray).

Every outer surface then needed to be brought back to bare, shiny steel. This was a step that could have been avoided had Shane known he would be painting the car – the original plan was that he would only shotblast it, so after the blasting he had covered it with a primer for protection. So that primer had to be removed with a wire wheel and a dual-action sander. Then the shiny steel was covered in filler.

I know what you're thinking: 'Filler! That's for scumbags and bodgers!' Well, if someone uses it to cover great swathes of terrible repairs then you'd be right, but using a thin layer to correct any minor imperfections is the difference between 'OK' paint and an immaculate finish. Even the brand new doors weren't smooth enough for a Faircharm finish and took a smear of filler too.

Once the body was sanded right back to perfect smoothness, a

white polyester spray filler coat was added. This plugged any of the tiny holes in the filler. The car did look great in white but it's too late to change my mind now – the next stage (after even more rubbing down of the spray filler) is colour.

The 2002 has been off the road for a long time now, but my desire to drive a decent four-cylinder BMW has remained strong. My 1998 E36 318is (saloon!), wasn't really cutting it, what with its mismatch of suspension: some cheap coilovers up front then lowering springs and standard dampers at the back.

A quick chat with Eibach had me yearning for a pair of its Pro-Street coilovers for the car's front end. They are a conventional coilover with a stainless steel body and plastic spring perch (so no corrosion to lock the threads), KW dampers and Eibach springs (here with a tender spring that gives a softer initial rate than a main spring alone). For the car's rear – which is a multi-link setup, with the springs separate from the dampers – the Pro-Street kit has springs with their

own anodised aluminium height-adjustable platforms, plus KW dampers. I was sold.

The suspension has transformed the car. Where it would crash, bang and rub, it now feels taught, light and, most of the time, composed. The rear is much firmer too, which has improved agility. The adjustable ride height means I can run an aggressive, nose-down stance. On track this has almost eradicated any sign of understeer, but it has made the car lively on the brakes. It's lots of fun, and thankfully feels much more benign on the road. And the ride is incomparable to before. On the cobbled-together parts it was dire, but now, despite its capable performance on track, it's not too firm. The rear can get a little bouncy over big undulations, but that's it.

My E36 still has nothing on my 02 – it's much heavier, probably has less power and is seriously lacking in induction noise – but at least it now has some sporting credentials and is far more entertaining to drive. ☒

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)



Above left: prepping the 2002 for paint. **Left:** new coilovers for E36 (below)

Date acquired	July 2008
Total mileage	146,050-ish
Mileage this month	0
Costs this month	£737.28 suspension £6500 paint, materials and labour
mpg this month	n/a



Lee Marshall

Tried & Tested



ZIRCOTEC CERAMIC AND ALUMINIUM COATING £372 (Clio 182 inlet manifold) zircotec.com

Applying a Zircotec ceramic coating to the outside of engine and exhaust components can help reduce heat-soak and improve performance. That's why most of today's F1 teams use Zircotec to ensure that manifolds, exhausts and the parts surrounding the brakes (which can reach 1000C) are well insulated. Zircotec claims that the coating, which is just 200-250 microns thick and is applied in 'molten grain' form, can reduce temperatures by 30 per cent.

evo doesn't have any F1 cars at its disposal, so the inlet manifold of my Clio 182 was used for our test. Though it's a good 600bhp down on an F1 car, even this humble hot hatch can significantly

benefit from a small temperature reduction to the air fed into the engine.

My newly white manifold arrived back (little more than a week after I'd taken it to Zircotec HQ in Oxfordshire) with a ceramic coating topped with aluminium to protect against radiant heat. Not only does it look the part, it feels noticeably colder to touch when the engine's up to temperature, confirming that the coating has indeed made a difference.

Zircotec can coat components right back to the exhaust tips in a variety of colours (prices start at £130) and a three-year warranty is included. I think my Clio may well be back for more.

Sam Sheehan (@evoSamSheehan)



SIMONIZ SHAMPOO & WAX £4.99 wilko.com

Washing and waxing a car can be tiring, but we think we've found a cheap product that combines the two. Just 30ml of Simoniz's Shampoo & Wax is needed per bucket of water, yet it does a remarkable job of displacing dirt, dries without streaks, and leaves a shiny, waxy finish.

It isn't a detailer's dream product, but as a quick and easy solution it's mighty impressive. So much so that **evo** snapper Aston Parrott has been using it to clean all of his subjects this month. **SS**

*The best motoring products, put through their paces by the **evo** team*

AUTOGLYM ENGINE & MACHINE CLEANER £10.49 autoglym.com

As sad as this may seem, I believe the clean and tidy engine bay of a well-prepared race car is a thing of beauty. To try and achieve this freshly-rebuilt-engine look on my 180,000-mile 3-series (quite a challenge!), I gave Autoglym's Engine & Machine Cleaner a try.

Sprayed on and 'agitated' with a soft brush, application of the cleaner is wonderfully easy. As long as you keep away from major electrical components and intakes, it can be used liberally. Then you rinse it off with water (even easier).

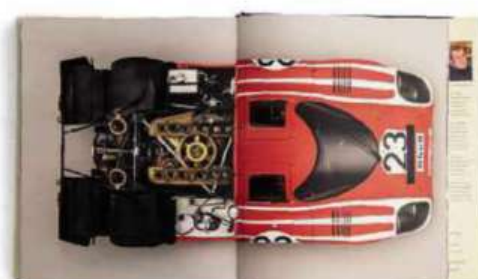
The cleaner does a good job of removing light grease, grime and heavy dust. A spray of WD40 and a blast of compressed air after rinsing the engine (it didn't feel right to simply leave it to dry) actually removed a greater amount of the thick, caked-on grime. For really filthy engines, starting and finishing with compressed air and WD40, while using the Autoglym cleaner in between, gives a great finish.

I also used the Engine & Machine Cleaner on the 40-year-old wiring loom of my 2002 because not only was it effective, it seemed forgiving on plastics and rubber, too, and did a wonderful job overall.

Will Beaumont
(@WillBeaumont)



PORSCHE 917: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF 917-023 £60 amazon.co.uk



A modern trend at the top table of motorsport is for lap times to shrink only incrementally each season. In some cases the cars aren't getting any faster at all (boo hiss), but it wasn't always so.

Most **evo** readers can reel off a set a jaw-dropping Porsche 917 anecdotes in the time it takes the car to get sideways at a wet Brand's Hatch, but I think my new favourite – one from motorsport journalist Ian Wagstaff's life-story of one particular 917 – is this. At the 1969 Le Mans 24 Hours, Porsche's new racing car repeatedly hit 225mph on the Mulsanne

Straight; this was the first time a car had gone over 200mph at Le Mans. Tone well and truly set.

Wagstaff's 319-page homage to the only Porsche nameplate that perhaps shades the status of 911 focuses on the unfancied car that first won Le Mans: the famous Team Salzburg 917-023. It draws on candid interviews with the likes of the freakishly gifted Vic Elford and the more pragmatic Richard Attwood, and the Brit duo's input is reason alone to spend the money if you're curious (and who isn't?).

Richard Lane (@_rlane_)

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£27,995

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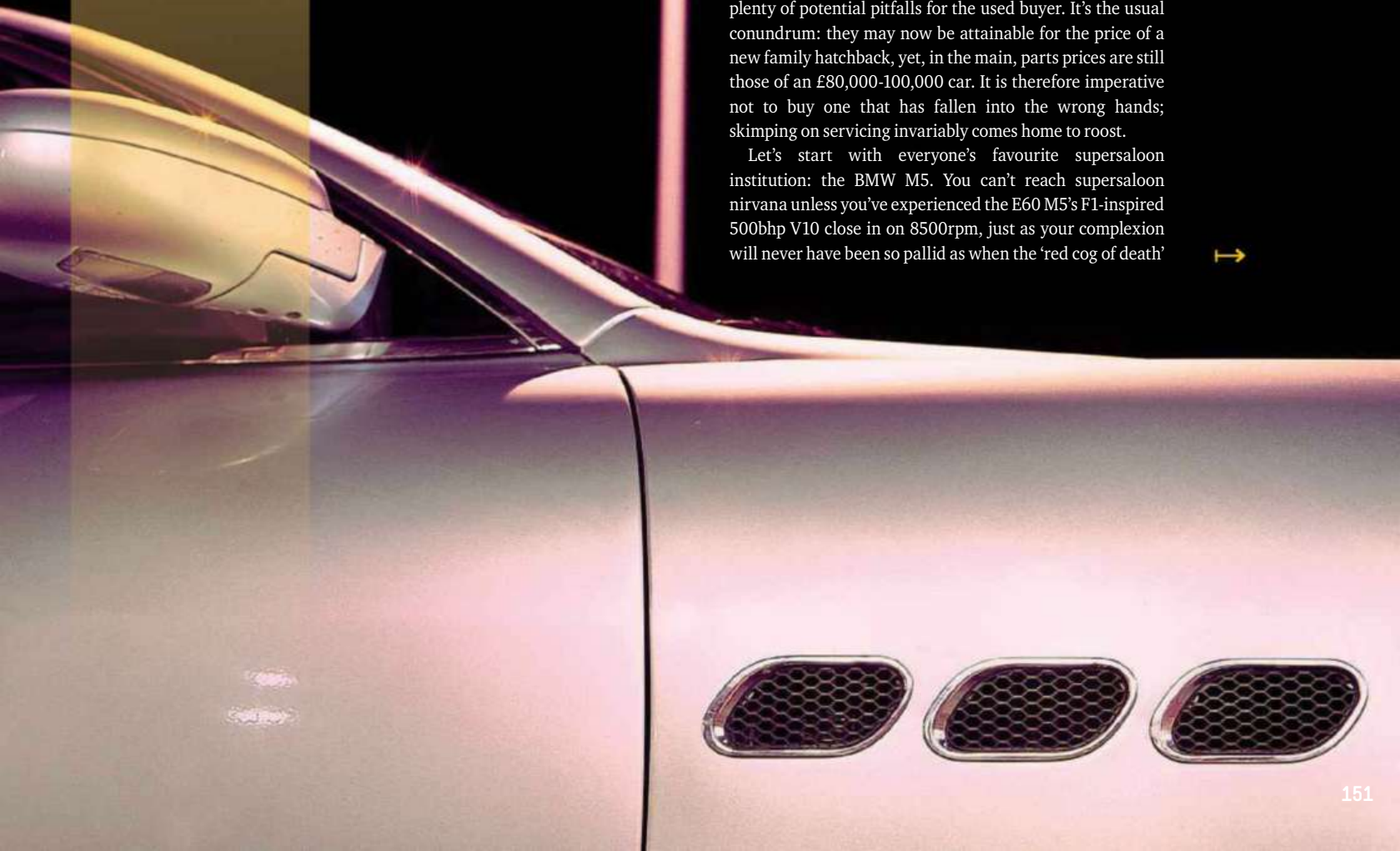
Fancy four seats and 400bhp+ for as little as £15,000? Look no further than these six second-hand supersaloons

by Adam Towler

ANALYSIS: THE SUPERSALOON YOU PROMISED YOURSELF

THIS MONTH WE'RE LOOKING AT SOME automotive heavy weaponry, served up with a hearty dose of practicality and comfort. It's an enticing trait of the supersaloon genre – albeit traumatic for the original purchaser – that these cars invariably suffer savage depreciation in their early lives. Sadly, there are plenty of potential pitfalls for the used buyer. It's the usual conundrum: they may now be attainable for the price of a new family hatchback, yet, in the main, parts prices are still those of an £80,000-100,000 car. It is therefore imperative not to buy one that has fallen into the wrong hands; skimping on servicing invariably comes home to roost.

Let's start with everyone's favourite supersaloon institution: the BMW M5. You can't reach supersaloon nirvana unless you've experienced the E60 M5's F1-inspired 500bhp V10 close in on 8500rpm, just as your complexion will never have been so pallid as when the 'red cog of death'





Left: W211 E63. **Right, clockwise:** C6 RS6, V10 M5, Panamera's rear space, Flying Spur

warning flashes up on the dash, indicating that there's a problem with the SMG transmission.

Dan Norris of Munich Legends (munichlegends.co.uk) is well aware of the potential pitfalls but summarises thus: 'There's nothing else like it in a four-door family car. Flat-out, all the complaints fall away.' Bottom of the market is now £15,000, but decent ones can be had for under £20,000. See Marque Focus later on in this issue for more info, and check out issue 185 for our buying guide.

A slightly safer option, if a little less dynamic, is the W211-series Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG. As with

any Merc that features the 6.2-litre M156, the thumping naturally aspirated V8 – here with 507bhp – takes centre stage. It's a tough engine, too, although early ones suffered from snapped head bolts and you should listen out for tappet noise, according to Olly Stoner at Prestige Car Service (prestigecarservice.co.uk). See issue 207 for a full buying guide. Scott Chappell at Simon Light Ltd (simonlight.co.uk) reckons the market for reasonable examples starts at £17,000, but £20,000 gets a low-mileage 2007 car. Top cars are £25,000, where the later W212 (with the 'square' headlights) takes over.

‘£20,000 gets a low-mileage 2007 E63 AMG. Top cars are £25,000’

If you're after brutal all-weather ability, then consider a ludicrously over-engineered Audi. Emissions, engine downsizing and fuel prices all make seeing anything quite like the 572bhp V10-engined 'C6' RS6 ever again a very remote possibility. Ben Watkins at MRC Tuning (mrctuning.com) highlights just two key faults for used buyers to look for. Firstly, there's the oil leak: 'All of them do it! It's from the PAS pump shaft that runs through the oil pump, and an engine-out job to fix at approximately £3500.' The other main issue is the coolant pipes that run through the back of the offside front wheelarch: check them for corrosion, because if they burst it's another engine-out job, at around £2500.

The market for RS6s is fairly static. 'The nice examples are holding their value,' says Sunny Panikker at Buckinghamshire High Performance (bhpmssport.com). 'But the difference is widening between the good and bad. Decent cars are £27,000 upwards, with corkers into the £40,000 bracket. At under 50,000 miles we'd definitely hold them in stock with our own money. There's nothing that freaks me out about them.'

The idea of a used Maserati might make the M5 seem like running a Micra, but the Quattroporte '5' (2004-2012) is not only relatively

NOW BUY ONE

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL FLYING SPUR £29,900

An early, 2005 Flying Spur, with a respectable 51,000 miles on the clock, this metallic black with black hide car features dark burr walnut interior trim, plus heated and cooled seats, front and rear. All for, yes, really, just £29,900.

pmcuk.com
01252 850231



BMW M5 £17,995

A nice example of an early E60 M5, from well-known BMW M specialist Munich Legends in East Sussex. This 2005 car is finished in the much favoured Interlagos Blue, and features the head-up display as well. With 61,000 miles recorded, it's very tempting at this price.

munichlegends.co.uk
01825 740456



MASERATI QUATTROPORTE £18,000

One of the early DuoSelect-gearbox Quattroportes from 2004, this dark blue car has travelled just 30,000 miles with two previous owners. Optional extras include colour satnav – although that may be a bit dated now – and the upgraded Bose sound system.

autofficina.co.uk
0208 3910002



PORSCHE PANAMERA TURBO £52,990

This Panamera shows the potency of depreciation. The Turbo retails for well over £100,000 new, before extras, but three years and 44,000 miles later you can pick up this Carbon Grey Metallic (with beige leather) car for less than half its original purchase price.

classicandperformancecar.com
01590 670777



hardy but surely also the prettiest saloon in recent memory. There are fundamentally two different versions: the earlier cars with the single-clutch automated DuoSelect gearbox, dry-sump V8 and transaxle, and the later cars with the six-speed ZF torque converter, directly attached to a wet-sump V8. Power ranges from 394bhp in the original 4.2-litre cars, up to 425bhp in some facelifted cars with 4.7 litres. For an idea of what goes wrong, see the 'Expert View' below, but an early, low-mileage car at £20,000 is a tempting proposition.

The Porsche Panamera is another, more recent oddball, but if you can get past the looks this is a versatile four-seater with plenty of Porsche DNA in the way it drives. 'They're holding their value better than their rivals,' says Arthur Little at Number One Prestige (numberoneprestige.co.uk). Only high-mileage V8s dip below £40,000, but good Turbos command from £60,000. See last

OPINION

'I BOUGHT ONE'

DAVID HEMMINGS

Porsche Panamera

'When I first drove my Panamera the thing I really noticed was its planted feel. It's much easier to drive than a 911 – you just don't have to think about it. I find it a real bonus having four seats, and the driving position is very low down compared to other sports saloons. It's a car that shrinks around you.'

THE SPECIALIST

GREG CRANMER

heritageautowerks.com

'Not a lot goes wrong with the Panamera. I've seen a few air-con compressor failures, and they're hard on brakes, but as a luxury GT they're great. I'd buy one as my own car. If you have 19-inch wheels or above, make sure you get one with air suspension, otherwise the ride is badly affected.'

EVO ROAD TESTER

NICK TROTT

If I had to pick one supersaloon, it would be an E60 M5. Much is said of the V10 engine, and the SMG 'box, but thread an E60 along a challenging B-road and it's the exquisite chassis setup and balance that impresses most. With modern supersaloons trading firepower for finesse, the E60 M5 is an experience to covet. Great value, great car.



month's buying guide for the low-down on what to be aware of.

Finally, placing more emphasis on luxury brings the Bentley Continental Flying Spur onto the radar. These 552bhp W12-engined limos are temptingly cheap, with the market for decent early (2005) cars currently dipping south of £30,000. 'It's a complicated car that needs proper maintenance – a service history is paramount,' says Stuart Worthington at Phantom Motor Cars Ltd (pmcuk.com). 'The engine and 'box are bulletproof, but front suspension arms wear, although they're not expensive. Discs and pads all done will be £1600, and check the drain holes for blockages. Buy the best you can afford.'

Expert view



ANDY HEYWOOD

McGRATH MASERATI

'The original car had a split personality,' says Andy Heywood of the Maserati Quattroporte 5. 'It was a sports car in a saloon body that appeals to the Maserati fan, but the auto cars are good in a different way.'

'It's extremely difficult to predict clutch failure on the DuoSelect, but diagnostics can read the percentage wear. To change the clutch, including the flywheel, costs £2000.'

'We have one car come in with 120,000 miles on it, and the exhaust is starting to give problems. That's £5000 for a new one from Maserati.'

'They don't go wrong like old Maseratis, but when they do, the parts prices are frightening.'

mcgrathmaserati.co.uk



SUMMARY

Imagine a graph, with luxury to sportiness on the X-axis, and running costs on the Y; plotting our contenders would neatly illustrate where they lie relative to each other. At one end of the spectrum is the E60 BMW M5. Drive one and, gearbox aside, it's hard to resist, and so are the keen prices. But it's a purchase that carries a major potential health-warning sticker. The opposing definition of a supersaloon is the Bentley Flying Spur – literally, a lot of car for the cash – with our other choices falling somewhere between the two. Practicality and performance rarely looked so appealing.



ELIAS ELIA

AUTOFFICINA

With a DuoSelect Quattroporte, Elias Elia advises manually downshifting into first when travelling below 10mph, such as when approaching a roundabout: 'Otherwise it'll ride the clutch prematurely.'

He believes the market will stabilise around £10,000 at the bottom, with 2007 cars in the low £20,000 bracket. Late cars are currently worth up to £40,000.

'I'd put aside £2000 for running costs, but the annual service is £600 and the major £1000. Brakes you can get really cheap if you look beyond official parts. Think £40 for a set of front pads, instead of £500...'

autofficina.co.uk



R32 SKYLINE PRICES DOUBLE IN JAPAN

A UK-based Japanese-car importer has confirmed that prices for good-condition R32 Skyline GT-Rs have more than doubled in Japan, due to demand from the USA, where 25-year-old examples can now be legally imported as classics. It's a sign that the days of cheap Skylines might well be numbered.



INCREASED DEMAND FOR USED DIESELS?

Car auction company Manheim reports that the recent drop in the price of diesel at the pumps has seen the average used price of oil burners rise by more than £200. This rise means the gap between equivalent petrol and diesel models has increased further. However, the ongoing diesel scandal surrounding VW may reverse this trend.



1980s HOT HATCH ICONS CONTINUE TO RISE IN VALUE

Changing fashions have dictated that prices for the most iconic 1980s hot hatches – read Peugeot 205 GTI and Renault 5 GT Turbo – are rising fast. To put this into perspective, £9660 was recently paid for a 50,000-mile Renault 5 Raider at auction. Five years ago, such a car would have sold for around £5k.

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USED RIVALS: SUB-£20,000 ROADSTERS

by Adam Towler



BMW Z4 M ROADSTER

Engine	In-line 6-cyl, 3246cc
Power	338bhp @ 7900rpm
Torque	269lb ft @ 4900rpm
Weight	1410kg [244bhp/ton]
0-62mph	4.8sec [claimed]
Top speed	155mph [limited]
evo rating	★★★★★

'I BOUGHT ONE'

'I bought a 3-litre Z4 ten years ago then took a test-drive six years later in a Z4 M Roadster. By the time I'd changed into second gear I knew I had to have it. I've done 21,000 miles in it since, been to the Ring five times and trackdays in the UK. It's been 100 per cent reliable and I love it.' **Pete Brown**

EXAMPLES



2007 £15,995

sjspecialistcars.co.uk
A 2007 car with 49,000 miles and a full BMW service history. Black with a red leather and carbon interior.

RUNNING COSTS

'We've had a lot of Z4 Ms come in with snapped bolts in the engine mountings. The ride is so stiff it seems to expose weakness wherever it can. Apart from this, however, these cars are very reliable. The engines are absolutely bulletproof, although we tend to find that owners don't do that many miles in them. Prices have been holding firm.'

Dan Norris, Munich Legends
munchlegends.co.uk



MERCEDES-BENZ SLK55 AMG

V8, 5439cc
355bhp @ 5750rpm
376lb ft @ 4000rpm
1575kg [229bhp/ton]
4.9sec [claimed]
155mph [limited]
★★★★★

'It makes a lovely noise. I used to have a 996 Carrera Cabriolet, and the suspension is tighter compared to that. The fuel consumption is similar, though. With the roof down, the 911 would creak, but the SLK doesn't, although I lubricate the rubbers in the roof mechanism every other month.' **Andrew Iles**



2005 £18,490

snippersgate.co.uk
A 2005 car in silver with only 47,000 miles. Features include satnav and 'Aircar', plus a full service history.

'We love these, they're very quick and extremely reliable. They're actually relatively cheap to maintain, too, although later ones have floating brake discs that cost £500 each. Any problems with the heated seats will be expensive to put right, and do keep an eye on the oil level. Otherwise, the engine is pretty much indestructible.'

Olly Stoner, Prestige Car Service
prestigecarservice.co.uk



PORSCHE BOXSTER S (987)

Flat-six, 3436cc
306bhp @ 6400rpm
265lb ft @ 5500rpm
1355kg [229bhp/ton]
5.3sec [claimed]
170mph [claimed]
★★★★★

'I bought it two years ago, having borrowed a friend's for a week. I think you're getting near-supercar performance at family saloon prices. Everything works: it's mid-engined, the engine is positioned low down in the car and it's a joy to drive. Keep the revs up and it flies.' **Adrian Rayson**



2005 £14,987

pctcars.co.uk
An early 3.2 S in Arctic Silver with 60,000 miles. Grey interior and a blue hood, plus bi-xenons and 19in alloys.

'Watch out for the IMS bearing problem and the other usual M96/97 issues with these engines. And check the condition of the radiators in the nose: leaves and debris collect in the vents and start the rot. Bushes wear in the suspension, particularly on the lower control arms. Along with worn shocks this leads to poor handling and creaking noises.'

Mikey Wastle, Autofarm
autofarm.co.uk

EVO CHOICE

The predictable decision would be to go for the Boxster and enjoy the satisfaction of owning one of the best sports cars ever produced. The 987 Boxster S is pretty much perfect: its powertrain and layout give sublime mid-engined poise and the chassis is so slick it can make cars from the class above feel

underwhelming. In S guise the flat-six has the power to make the most of it, but is it too perfect?

The SLK55 AMG is a little unhinged by comparison, with its V8 motor and relatively short chassis making for some interesting dynamics even despite the fact you can't fully switch off the

stability control. Mercedes' quality is built in, but it's the 55's wild side that appeals.

That leaves the Z4. We'd take a coupe over a drop-top, but roof down, revs up and straight-six singing, the 'M' shakes off the regular Roadster's effeminate image and is hard to resist.

BUYING JOURNEY

From Scirocco to M3, an **evo** reader charts his impressively diverse car ownership history



RICH BRASSINGTON,
BERKSHIRE



2011

6th **Mazda RX-8**

7th **BMW M3 (E46)**

'I'd always wanted one on these, and vividly remember the first one I saw on the road. The numbers started making sense – man maths – so I went and looked at a few.'

2001

1st **VW Scirocco 1.6 GT (Mk2)**

'Bought in 2001, with 13in, nine-spoke Mk1 Golf GTI alloys, this car lasted a whole nine months until I handed it on to a mate. Most of the cylinders were still firing at that point.'



2003

2nd **Renault 19 16v (Ph1)**

'I spotted this, parked up for sale, on a grass verge. It was a great car; it felt fast, handled well, was a bit different and generally fantastic. Until a guy in an XR3i drove into the side of me.'

2009

5th **Honda Civic Type R (EP3)**

'I bought the Honda new under a company-car opt-out scheme. It was a brilliant all-rounder but, ultimately, it wasn't rear-wheel drive, so I replaced it with a thirsty Mazda RX-8.'

What's next?

'I still get a thrill from driving the M3 and honestly can't think of anything that offers quite as good value in performance for the money. This will sound familiar, but house deposits and a new kitchen and bathroom have stopped me moving onto anything newer, but that doesn't bother me.'

Tip

Rich, have you seen how temptingly affordable E92 M3s are these days? It's hard to ignore a 414bhp V8...

evo view

Rich's car-buying journey begins and ends with coupes, but includes a hot-hatch interlude of considerable appeal. The 16v Renault is almost a forgotten car these days, but for a brief period it was the (large) fast hatch of choice during that difficult transition from 1980s to 1990s. Just try finding a nice one today.

From there, Rich's schooling in the BMW way started like it does for so many enthusiasts: the E30. Selling the 325i for more than he paid for it was obviously a good move, but probably best he doesn't look up what a similar car goes for today...

The RX-8 appealed for the same reasons. Mazda sold thousands of them in the UK because of the individual styling, fine handling and surprising practicality. Like so many other buyers, however, Rich found it wasn't as quick as the power output suggested and the fuel consumption was heavy – even when you weren't trying.

The E46 M3 is an **evo** Market favourite, and now looks increasingly like a canny investment. It really is hard to beat the cry of the S54 straight-six at full cry.

3rd **BMW 320i SE (E30)**

4th **BMW 325i Sport (E30)**

'I had two smart red BMW E30s in the finest 1980s tradition. The 320i was a superb car, but just a bit slow. The Sport was what got me properly into performance cars.'



2005





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BUYING GUIDE: NISSAN 370Z 2009-PRESENT

Rear-drive, a gutsy V6, a reputation for reliability – and yours from just £13k

by Peter Tomalin



THE 350Z HAD BEEN A BREATH OF fresh air in 2003, with its brawny, front-mounted 3.5-litre V6, lairy rear-wheel drive, two seats and a decent boot, chunky good looks and keen pricing. It wasn't the last word in finesse, but it was bloody good fun.

Nissan kept the formula much the same when 370Z replaced 350Z in April 2009. Where the final 350s had seen power grow to 309bhp, the 370, with its extra .2 of a litre, was up another 17bhp to 326bhp. 0-62mph was clipped a tad at 5.4sec, top speed the same electronically limited 155mph. Visually it was an evolution, a slightly shorter wheelbase making it look even chunkier, the more angular lights giving it a touch more attitude.

List price for the base model was £26,895, but

most buyers ticked the box for the GT pack, which took the price to £30,195 and added 19in wheels and a load of extra toys, the best of which was Synchro Rev Control, which blipped the throttle automatically on downshifts. There was also an auto (£1400), which came with paddleshifters.

The 370Z Roadster arrived in March 2010; more 'us' was the GT Edition that came in May 2011, with suspension revised by UK engineers at Nissan Technical Centre Europe. Ride and handling were both improved, while extra standard kit included darkened 19in alloys, satnav and a parking camera. The whole range got a round of revisions in October 2012, including a reprofiled front bumper, daytime running lights and more colours choices.

Summer 2013 saw the arrival of the 370Z Nismo,

with a £36,995 price tag (a whole ten grand more than the base Zed). That price, and the association with Nissan's famed racing arm, raised expectations that the car couldn't quite meet. Power was up only a smidge at 339bhp, 0-62 trimmed only a little to 5.2sec. Under the aero was a reinforced structure, retuned suspension and lots of standard kit, but the 1500kg kerb weight blunted agility. Still, if you want the ultimate so far, this is it.

The bargains, though, are the early GTs. They're not cheap to run: mpg is low to mid-20s, road tax a hefty £485, rear tyres the thick end of £200 each, and servicing costs can sting (though, as ever, it's worth shopping around). But if you like simple, reliable, big-hearted rear-wheel-drive fun, there's still little else to touch them.

CHECKPOINTS

ENGINE & TRANSMISSION

Our guide to the 370Z is Neil Tetherton at Junction 17 Cars, which generally has at least half a dozen 370Zs in stock. 'We'd started specialising in 350Zs, so the 370 was a natural progression,' he explains. 'We do loads of Porsches and BMWs too, but there are plenty of specialists for those, not many for Zeds. So we found a bit

of a niche.

'We like them because they're so damn robust! The engine was basically carried over from the later "HR" unit in the 350, so is very familiar engineering-wise. Properly serviced, there really are no big issues with either the engine or the transmission, and we've seen cars with up to 80,000 miles.'

The V6 has a timing chain, so there's no

cambelt to replace. Service intervals are 12 months or 9000 miles, whichever comes sooner, and since most Zeds do fairly small mileages, most of them simply have an annual service. The big service is the sixth one, which includes spark plugs and can cost over £500.

'It's important the schedule is followed,' says Neil, 'with more frequent oil changes if a car is tracked.

We've had issues in the past with cars overheating if the oil isn't in good condition.' From 2012, an oil cooler was standard; for an earlier car on track an aftermarket unit is a wise investment.

'The transmission, so far, is proving equally robust,' Neil continues. 'We haven't had to change a clutch yet, but from experience with the 350 it's not a particularly big job.

With a manual car, switch the Synchro Rev on and check it's working on every downshift; with an auto make sure the paddleshifts are working crisply both up and down the 'box.'

SUSPENSION, STEERING & BRAKES

The 19in wheels are prone to kerbing and pothole damage, so check both outside and

inside edges. And check there's plenty of life left in the tyres. 'They wear through tyres pretty effectively!' says Neil. 'Particularly the inner shoulders of the fronts.'

On the test drive listen for any untoward clonks or knocks – if you hear anything it's probably a worn drop link. 'The suspension arms on the 350Z were prone to wear,' adds Neil, 'but these were redesigned for the 370.'



Below left: 3.7-litre engine is reliable.
Bottom: Nismo version has bodykit, red interior trim (left) and bespoke wheels (below)



BODY, INTERIOR & ELECTRICS

Don't be surprised if the front of the car has had a respray. 'They're very prone to stone-chipping,' says Neil, 'and not just the spoiler, but also the front of the bonnet and onto the front wings. 'Glance underneath for signs of corrosion – Japanese cars are never the best protected – but it really shouldn't be a problem just yet.'

Early cars had weak hatch springs, so check they're strong enough to pop the hatch clear of the latch. With the Roadster, check the hood operation and the condition of the fabric, particularly where the windows drop. 'Interiors seem to be holding up better than 350s at a similar age,' says Neil. 'Any loose trim would suggest it's been removed at some point, so might worth investigating.'

RIVALS

PORSCHE CAYMAN

Porsche's mid-engined coupe has a chassis of rare brilliance, and S versions have the go to match. First-gen cars ('06-'09) now from as little as £13k. Cayman R is an all-time **evo** favourite.

AUDI TT RS

With 335bhp from its turbocharged 2.5-litre five-cylinder engine and, of course, quattro four-wheel drive, the RS is fast and also characterful. Prices start from £25,000.

BMW Z4 M COUPE

Conceptually arguably the 370Z's closest rival, the 338bhp Z4 M Coupe ('06-'09) is a rewarding steer for the committed driver. Plenty around from £13,000 to £20,000.

INFORMATION



NISSAN 370Z GT COUPE

Engine	3696cc V6
Max power	326bhp @ 7000rpm
Max torque	269lb ft @ 5200rpm
Transmission	Six-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, LSD
Weight	1520kg
Power-to-weight	218bhp/ton
0-62mph	5.4sec (claimed)
Top speed	155mph (limited)
Price new	£30,195 (2009)

PARTS PRICES

(Prices from junction17cars.co.uk and glynhopkin.com/nissan. Tyre price from blackcircles.com. All prices include VAT but exclude fitting charges)

Tyres (each)	£152.09 front, £194.95 rear (Bridgestone Potenza)
Front pads (set)	£31.90 (aftermarket)
Front discs (pair)	£127.00 (aftermarket)
Damper	£152.54 (OE)
Clutch kit	£523.50 (aftermarket)
Catalytic converter	£1589.45 (single, OE)
Exhaust rear box	£334.43 (OE)
Spark plugs (set)	£92.37 (OE)

SERVICING

(Prices from junction17cars.co.uk, including VAT)

Recommended intervals	12 months or 9000 miles, whichever sooner
Minor service	£145
Major service	£350



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'I BOUGHT ONE'

RICH FIELDING

'I'm a die-hard Nissan fan, but I wanted something a bit newer than the R33 and R34 Skylines that I'd previously owned. I did have a brief spell with a 2007 350Z but I wasn't a fan of the chatter from the dual-mass flywheel, or the rather clunky manual gearbox. I decided that I needed to spend more and find a 370Z with the seven-speed paddleshift auto.

'I settled on a white 2012 GT Edition auto from a Nissan dealer. I've had it for almost two years now and have covered around 7000 miles, bringing the total to 35,000.

'An aftermarket cat-back exhaust was soon ordered to address the woeful lack of noise from the standard car

– it's a popular modification for 370 owners. I've made a few other minor mods, but the best by far was replacing the OE Bridgestone Potenzas with Michelin Pilot Super Sports. They give a big improvement in grip and stability, and produce slightly less road noise, too, although the GT Edition benefits from increased soundproofing over earlier models. The 370Z can be a little tyre-fussy, so matched sets are important.

'The only thing to have gone wrong was a worn front drop link, a common issue but a cheap fix and an excuse to upgrade. Running costs aren't too bad. Fuel averages at about 23-25mpg on superunleaded

and a routine annual service is £200-300 from a specialist. Insurance was a pleasant surprise, but annual road tax is a whopping £490!

'It's my weekend car. It's a lot of fun on a twisty road but it also eats the miles like a good GT should. I've done a few trackdays, too: the brakes are excellent and oil cooling hasn't been an issue – post 2012 cars have improved oil cooling.

'I certainly plan to keep it – at least until I can afford an R35 GTR!'



WHAT WE SAID



370Z GT v CAYMAN

'The Nissan is more flamboyant, the rear end governing the angle of attack. Traction off, turn-in, get on the power and feel the weight and emphasis drop onto the broad shoulders of the rear 275/35 ZR19 Potenzas. An extra mid-corner prod arcs the tail wide. It's a happy, magnanimous, easy slider that enjoys demonstrating its prowess. Just like the old 350Z. What's changed is the 100mm shorter wheelbase, the rear wheels brought forward, nearer to your backside, so any movements beneath it are magnified.

'The 3.7-litre V6 is gutsier than the lofty 5200rpm torque peak would suggest. It feels fast enough to keep a 911 honest... [but] apart from a gusty rush of intake and exhaust noise at start-up the engine note isn't very melodious and the V6's bland howl blends with the surprisingly invasive drone of road noise.

'On poor surfaces the chassis can be caught out, the damping struggling to keep up, but on smooth tarmac it's great, eager to please, eager to make you feel like a hero. It's more energetic than the 350Z and tidier, too, but still a slow-in, fast-out machine that lacks the Cayman's detailed levels of communication and ultimately its depth of ability. The Cayman is a genuine sports car, the 370Z an entertaining sports GT.' – **evo** 131 (June 2009)

IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

2010 (60) 370Z GT PACK £14,475

79,092 miles // Magnetic Black metallic // part leather // FNSH, seven stamps // 19in alloys, Bose, satnav
junction17cars.co.uk



2013 370Z GT EDITION £21,995

14,895 miles // Ebisu Black // limited edition // Premium satnav // rear-view camera // Bose
charleshurstgroup.co.uk



2013 (63) 370Z NISMO £27,995

7000 miles // Nismo sports seats // Premium satnav // Bose // rear-view camera // 19in Nismo alloys
classicandperformancecar.com



WHAT TO PAY

£?
£13-25k

Even the earliest 370Zs are still depreciating, but not steeply – buoyant prices for 350s are helping keep 370s firm. Condition is important, but age and mileage are still the main factors affecting value while the model is still relatively new. Manuals and autos are valued the same, but coupes are worth more than convertibles with the same provenance. Early, high-mileage examples start around £13,000, but £15k-20k gives a good choice of low-mileage 2010/2011 cars. Nismos start at around £25k.

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MARQUE FOCUS: BMW M

Rewarding to drive *and*
a safe bet financially?
Step forward a select
band of BMW models

by Adam Towler

LET'S START WITH THE UBIQUITOUS E92 M3, defined by its high-revving, naturally aspirated V8. Prices for early, high-mileage coupes are now comfortably into the teens, and there are plenty on the market. These cars may one day be classics, even if prices are expected to slide further in the short term. Really nice cars start at around £20,000, and even the best are only in the £30,000 bracket. Watch out for failing throttle bodies and noisy differentials, but they're generally tough cars. Very few experts rate the poorly E93 Convertible, so we'll gloss over it here.

The 1M has achieved something of modern-classic status, with values holding; low-mileage cars exceed £40,000. Dan Norris (see below) believes this buoyancy is largely led by the trade,

and doesn't necessarily see them as a long-term investment, while specialist Birds cautions that the forthcoming M2 might affect the market.

And what of the mighty V10s? They're a high-risk purchase, and this page could easily be filled four times over with buying advice, but the core message is: research your purchase thoroughly. Some cars still have a BMW warranty, which is a comforting thought. A £15,000 E60 M5 is a gamble, £17,500 is fair, and £20,000 secures a good one. Nice M6s are worth a bit more, and Norris tips those as a much better investment bet.

Then there's the Z4 M. A cult car in coupe form, and somewhat forgotten as a roadster, this flawed but individual BMW won't be to all tastes. Currently in the high teens, it's easy to see them rising.

Expert view

BIRDS & MUNICH LEGENDS

There's a marked difference of opinion between our experts on the V10-engined BMW M5 and M6 models. Birds won't retail them as a rule due to 'long-term mechanical issues and running costs'. Munich Legends sells plenty, but is under no illusions that they're a special purchase requiring plenty of forethought and homework. 'There are some issues you should think about before you even think about buying one,' says Legends' Dan Norris, citing clutch and gearbox wear and fuel consumption. 'Allow your prejudices to have free rein, and get it inspected,' he urges.

The Z4 M, particularly in Coupe guise, has always been a car to split opinion, and while Norris diplomatically admits that it's a cult car, at Birds they love them.

Both are big fans of the V8 M3s though, although Birds prefers the manual cars while Munich Legends leans towards the DCT versions. Both agree that getting the right spec on the car is important, with EDC damping a must. Norris has even used an M3 saloon as his daily driver for the past four years, and loves it dearly. These are still not cars to purchase lightly, however. 'Anything that makes you raise an eyebrow about the car, just walk away,' Birds advises.



SERIAL BUYER

FERGUS CALDER

Fergus Calder got hooked on the M doctrine driving his father's E46 M3, and years later realised the dream by acquiring an E92 M3 Coupe himself.

'I averaged 12-13mpg. At best I got 18mpg. The fuel costs were mental, and were one of the reasons I got rid of it. It does take its toll on your wallet. Even so, I'd have another one.'

Calder replaced the much-loved M3 with a 1M in Valencia Orange. 'It felt smaller than the M3. It was nice to have something more intimate. There was no messing about with it, but once you'd learnt how it worked, it never scared you. And it always wanted to go sideways – in a good way.'

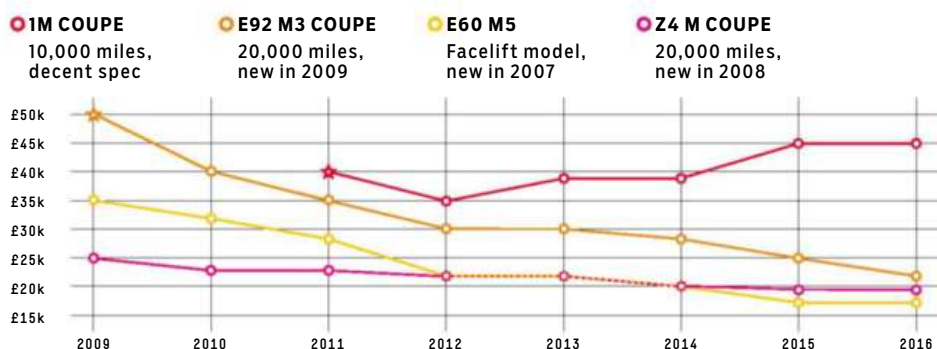
'I put a Larini exhaust on it as it was way too quiet after the V8 M3. I had it for 16 months. I actually sold it for more than I paid for it, and given that it had the service pack, it only cost me fuel and tyres. I'd find any excuse to get in and go for a drive.'

'I might get an E39 M5 next. After all, it's not about lap times; it's how it makes you feel. The 1M didn't have all those silly electronic aids, and the E39 is the same sort of thing.'



Trends

Where BMW M prices have been –
and where they could be heading



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SHOULD YOU KEEP IT?

Porsche 911 (996)



If you can't face selling your car, take a look at the latest options to upgrade and improve it instead **by Antony Ingram**

IF YOU OWN A PORSCHE 996, CHANCES are you won't need much convincing to keep it. While it doesn't yet have the investment potential of earlier 911s, it's an underappreciated gem – affordable, usable and brilliant to drive.

Reliability concerns contribute to the low values, but specialist RPM Technik will fit a simple fix for one of the biggest issues, the failing intermediate shaft (IMS) bearing. Parts and installation costs around £830 (with a clutch replacement).

You might well consider a set of lightweight wheels next. **evo's** Jethro Bovingdon runs a set of OZ Racing Alleggerita wheels in 8 x 18in on the front and 10 x 18in on the rear on his 996 (pictured). They shed around 15kg of unsprung weight.

Indeed, alloywheels.com sells a set in that size in a titanium finish for £1669. A set of Michelin Pilot Sport 2s in 235/40 R18 (front) and 285/30 R18 (rear) to wrap around them costs £622.36 fitted from blackcircles.com.

Aftermarket news



BBR SUPER 185

BBR's work on the humble Mazda 3 is the best indication yet of what might be possible with the all-new MX-5. Power climbs from the standard 118bhp to 182bhp. For £2154 fitted, you get a Starchip ECU upgrade, the removal of the standard throttle restriction, a 4-2-1 manifold and a cold-air induction kit.



592BHP BRABUS C63

Sometimes, the 503bhp in a Mercedes-AMG C63 S just isn't enough. The new Brabus PowerXtra B40 kit exists for such times. Injection and ignition remaps and higher boost pressure take the 4-litre V8 to 592bhp. New 20-inch Brabus wheels and 255/30 (front) and 275/30 (rear) tyres put the power to the road.



BRABUS TESLA

American electric-car maker Tesla Motors has close links with Daimler, so it's no surprise to see Brabus also turning its attention to the Model S. Unfortunately, the 691bhp output of the dual-motor P85D remains untouched, but there's a carbonfibre bodykit, 21in wheels and some luxurious interior appointments.



ABT RS3

You might bemoan the trend away from natural aspiration to turbocharging, but ABT Sportsline's reworking of the 2.5-litre, five-cylinder turbo unit in the Audi RS3 makes the benefits clear. Power jumps from 362bhp to 424bhp with little more than custom software. Top speed is 177mph while 0-62mph takes 4.1sec.

NEXT MONTH

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'Why I kept it'

EDWARD MARSHALL

VW GOLF RALLYE

'VWs have been in the family since I can remember; my older brothers had Beetles and my dad all kinds of weird Santanas and Passats. When I first saw a picture of a Rallye, that was it. I was hooked.

'Until then I had been a Mk1 Golf fan through and through, but this box-arched homologation special was something else. It was an Audi Quattro and BMW M3 rival, a competitor for the Lancia Integrale.

'I bought my Rallye when it was ten years old and I could afford to insure it. I did what any 27-year-old would do and started to modify it. Nothing drastic – coilovers, bigger wheels. And then the dream turned sour when I kissed an oak tree in the snow. So much for infallible four-wheel drive... I couldn't afford to repair it, so it sat in my parents' garage.

'When I could afford the repairs, the first thing I did was return it to standard, which took a year or two. When that was done I headed down the concours route, which ultimately led to me trailering the car to events rather than driving it.

'I did try and sell it after my concours phase, to pay for a house move, but it was worth a fraction of what it cost me and, more importantly, no one wanted to buy it.

'The Rallye is now finally back in my driving life. Now that I don't need to sell it, I was offered a silly sum for it this summer. I turned the offer down because I appreciate the car more now than I did when I first bought it. And I've no idea what I'd replace it with; my wife already has its natural successor – a Golf R.'

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11.00 One hour of practice lapping
12.00 Timed lapping begins
13.00 Session ends

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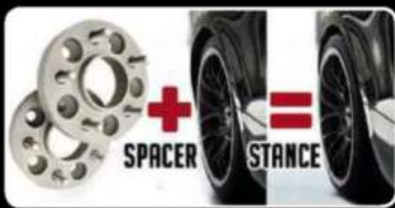
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Database

Key = new entry this month. * = grey import. Entries in italics are for cars no longer on sale. **Issue no.** is for our most recent major test of the car (D = Driven, R = Road test or group test, F = Feature). Call 0844 844 0039 to order a back issue. **Price** is on-the-road including VAT and delivery charges. **Engine** is the car's main motor only – additional hybrid tech isn't shown. **Weight** is the car's kerb weight as quoted by the manufacturer. **bhp/ton** is the power-to-weight ratio based on manufacturer's kerb weight. **0-60mph** and **0-100mph** figures in bold are independently recorded, all other performance figures are manufacturers' claims. **CO2 g/km** is the official EC figure and **EC mpg** is the official 'Combined' figure or equivalent.

Knowledge

Superminis / Hot Hatches

	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Abarth 595 Competizione	196 D	£18,960	4/1368	158/5500	170/3000	1035kg	155	7.4	-	130	155	43.5	+ Spirited engine, still looks great - Favours fun over finesse	★★★★☆
Abarth 695 Biposto	205 R	£32,990	4/1369	187/5500	184/3000	997kg	191	5.9	-	143	-	-	+ Engineered like a true Abarth product - Desirable extras make this a £50k city car	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Mito Cloverleaf	149 R	£18,870	4/1368	168/5500	184/2500	1145kg	149	7.5	-	136	139	47.1	+ Great MultiAir engine, impressive ride - Not as feisty as we hoped	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulietta QV	199 D	£28,120	4/1742	237/5750	251/2000	1320kg	182	6.0	-	151	162	40.3	+ Still looks good, and now it's got the 4C's engine - Pricey, and it has more rewarding rivals	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo Giulietta Cloverleaf	144 D	10-14	4/1742	232/5500	251/1900	1320kg	179	6.8	-	150	177	37.2	+ Shows signs of deep talent... - but should be more exciting	★★★★★
Alfa Romeo 147 GTA	187 R	03-06	6/3179	247/6200	221/4800	1360kg	185	6.0	15.5	153	-	23.3	+ Mk1 Focus RS pace without the histrionics - Slightly nose-heavy	★★★★★
Audi S1	211 R	£24,900	4/1984	228/6000	273/1600	1315kg	176	5.8	-	155	162	40.4	+ Compliant and engaging chassis; quick, too - Looks dull without options	★★★★★
Audi A1 quattro	181 R	13	4/1984	253/6000	258/2500	1420kg	181	5.7	-	152	199	32.8	+ Polished 253bhp all-wheel-drive A1 - Just 19 for UK, Porsche Cayman price	★★★★★
Audi S3	188 R	£30,640	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1395kg	216	5.4	12.5	155	162	40.4	+ Lots of grip and one of the best-sounding four-pot turbos - Still a little too clinical	★★★★★
Audi RS3	210 D	£39,950	5/2480	362/5500	343/1625	1520kg	242	4.3	-	155	189	34.9	+ Addictive noise, lighter on its feet than its predecessor - Still a shade sensible	★★★★★
Audi S3	106 R	06-12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1455kg	183	5.6	13.6	155	198	33.2	+ Very fast, very effective, very... err, quality - A little too clinical	★★★★★
Audi RS3 Sportback	156 R	11-12	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1575kg	216	4.5	-	155	212	31.0	+ Above, with added five-pot character - Again, see above...	★★★★★
BMW 125i M Sport	176 D	£26,020	4/1997	218/5000	228/1350	1420kg	156	6.4	-	155	154	42.8	+ Performance, price, running costs - Dull four-pot soundtrack	★★★★★
BMW M135i	212 R	£31,325	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1430kg	228	5.1	-	155	188	35.3	+ Powertrain, noise, chassis, price - M235i looks nicer, and has an LSD on its options list	★★★★★
BMW 130i M Sport	106 R	05-10	6/2996	261/6500	232/2750	1450kg	183	6.1	15.3	155	-	34.0	+ Fantastic engine - Suspension can still get a little boingy	★★★★★
Citroën C1/Peugeot 107/Toyota Aygo	126 R	£8095+	3/998	68/6000	68/3600	790kg	87	14.2	-	98	103	61.4	+ Full of character and insurance-friendly - Insurance friendly power	★★★★★
Citroën Saxo VTS	020 R	97-03	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	935kg	130	7.6	22.6	127	-	34.9	+ Chunky, chuckable charger - Can catch out the unwary	★★★★★
Citroën AX GT	195 R	87-92	4/1360	85/6400	86/4000	722kg	120	9.2	-	110	-	-	+ Makes terrific use of 85bhp - Feels like it's made from paper	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 1.6 THP	142 R	£17,475	4/1598	154/6000	177/1400	1240kg	126	7.2	-	133	155	42.2	+ A proper French hot hatch - Petrolheads might find it too 'designed'	★★★★★
Citroën DS3 Racing	153 D	11-12	4/1598	204/6000	203/2000	1240kg	167	6.5	-	146	149	-	+ Faster, feistier version of above - Not as hardcore as its 'Racing' tag suggests	★★★★★
Fiat Panda 100HP	132 R	06-11	4/1368	99/6000	97/4250	975kg	130	9.5	-	115	154	43.5	+ Most fun per pound on the market - Optional ESP can't be turned off	★★★★★
Fiat Punto Evo Sporting	141 D	£13,355	4/1368	133/5000	152/1750	1155kg	117	8.5	-	127	129	50.4	+ Great engine, smart styling - Dynamics don't live up to the Evo name	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	207 R	£17,545	4/1596	179/5700	214/1600	1088kg	167	7.4	18.4	137	138	47.9	+ Chassis, price, punchy performance - Not as powerful as key rivals	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST Mountune	213 R	£18,144	4/1596	212/6000	236/1750	1088kg	198	6.4	-	140	138	-	+ One of the best mid-sized hatches made even better - Badge snobbery	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S	123 D	08-13	4/1596	118/6000	112/4050	1045kg	115	9.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ Genuinely entertaining supermini - Grown up compared to Twingo/Swift	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta Zetec S Mountune	132 R	08-13	4/1596	138/6750	125/4250	1080kg	130	7.9	-	120	134	48.7	+ As above, with a fantastically loud exhaust... - if you're 12 years old	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST	075 D	05-08	4/1999	148/6000	140/4500	1137kg	132	7.9	-	129	-	38.2	+ Great looks, decent brakes - Disappointing chassis, gutless engine	★★★★★
Ford Fiesta ST185 Mountune	115 R	08	4/1999	185/6700	147/3500	1137kg	165	6.9	-	129	-	-	+ Fiesta ST gets the power it always needed - OTT exhaust note	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST TDCi Estate	206 D	£23,295	4/1997	182/3500	295/2000	1488kg	124	8.3	-	135	110	67.3	+ Performance not sacrificed at the altar of economy - Interior design still jars slightly	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST	207 R	£22,195	4/1999	247/5500	265/2000	1362kg	184	6.5	-	154	159	41.5	+ Excellent engine - Scappy when pushed	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune	187 D	£23,220	4/1999	271/5500	295/2750	1362kg	202	5.7	-	154+	169	-	+ Great value upgrade - Steering still not as fearsome as that of some rivals	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST	119 R	05-10	5/2522	222/6000	236/1600	1392kg	162	6.7	16.8	150	224	30.4	+ Value, performance, integrity - Big engine compromises handling	★★★★★
Ford Focus ST Mountune	137 R	08-11	5/2522	256/5500	295/2500	1392kg	187	5.8	14.3	155	224	-	+ ST takes extra power in its stride - You probably still want an RS	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk2)	195 R	09-11	5/2522	300/6500	324/2300	1467kg	208	5.9	14.2	163	225	30.5	+ Huge performance, highly capable FWD chassis - Body control is occasionally clumsy	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS500	181 R	10-11	5/2522	345/6000	339/2500	1467kg	239	5.6	12.7	165	225	-	+ More power and presence than regular RS - Pricey	★★★★★
Ford Focus RS (Mk1)	207 R	02-03	4/1998	212/5500	229/3500	1278kg	169	5.9	14.9	143	-	-	+ Some are great - Some are awful (so make sure you drive plenty)	★★★★★
Ford Escort RS Cosworth	157 R	92-96	4/1993	224/6250	224/3500	1275kg	179	6.2	-	137	-	-	+ The ultimate Essex hot hatch - Unmodified ones are rare, and getting pricey...	★★★★★
Ford Puma 1.7	095 R	97-02	4/1679	123/6300	116/4500	1041kg	120	8.6	27.6	122	-	38.2	+ Everything - Nothing. The 1.4 is worth a look too	★★★★★
Ford Racing Puma	128 R	00-01	4/1679	153/7000	119/4500	1174kg	132	7.8	23.2	137	-	34.7	+ Exclusivity - The standard Puma does it so well	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R	212 R	£29,995	4/1996	306/6500	295/2500	1378kg	226	5.7	-	167	170	38.7	+ Great on smooth roads - Turbo engine not as special as old NA units; styling a bit 'busy'	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (FN2)	102 R	07-11	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.8	17.5	146	215	31.0	+ Looks great, VTEC more accessible - Steering lacks feel, inert balance	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Championship White	126 D	09-10	4/1998	198/7800	142/5600	1267kg	158	6.6	-	146	-	31.0	+ Limited-slip diff a welcome addition - It's not available on the standard car	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R Mugen	195 R	09-11	4/1998	237/8300	157/6250	1233kg	195	5.9	-	155	-	-	+ Fantastic on road and track - There's only 20, and they're a tad pricey...	★★★★★
Honda Civic Type R (EP3)	075 R	01-05	4/1998	197/7400	145/5900	1204kg	166	6.8	16.9	146	-	31.7	+ Potent and great value - 'Breadvan' looks divide opinion, duff steering	★★★★★
Kia Proceed GT	207 R	£20,200	4/1591	201/6000	195/1750	1448kg	143	7.4	-	143	171	38.2	+ Fun and appealing package - Lacks sharpness and control at its outer edges	★★★★★
Lancia Delta Integrale	194 R	88-93	4/1995	207/5750	220/3500	1300kg	162	5.7	-	137	-	23.9	+ One of the finest cars ever built - Demands love, LHD only	★★★★★
Mazda 2.1 S Sport	132 R	£13,495	4/1498	102/6000	101/4000	1030kg	107	10.4	-	117	135	48.7	+ Fun and funky - Feels tinny after a Mini	★★★★★
Mazda 3 MPS	137 R	06-13	4/2261	256/5500	280/3000	1385kg	188	6.3	14.5	155	224	29.4	+ Quick, eager and very good value - The steering's iffy	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG	194 R	£37,845	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1480kg	244	4.3	10.6	155	161	40.9	+ Blisteringly quick everywhere - Not as rewarding as some slower rivals	★★★★★
MG3 Style	190 D	£9999	4/1498	104/6000	101/4750	1155kg	91	10.4	-	108	136	48.7	+ Decent chassis, performance and price - Thrashy engine, cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mini Cooper (F56)	194 D	£15,300	3/1499	134/4500	162/1250	1085kg	125	7.9	-	130	105	62.8	+ Punchy three-cylinder engine, good chassis - Tubby styling	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (F56)	196 D	£18,665	4/1998	189/4700	206/1250	1160kg	166	6.8	-	146	133	49.6	+ Still has that Mini DNA - Expensive with options; naff dash displays	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works (F56)	211 R	£23,050	4/1998	228/5200	236/1250	1200kg	193	6.3	-	153	155	42.2	+ Fast, agile, super-nimble - OE tyres lack outright grip	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works Coupe (R58)	164 R	£23,805	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1175kg	180	6.3	-	149	165	39.8	+ The usual raucous Mini JCW experience - But with a questionable 'helmet' roof...	★★★★★
Mini Cooper (R56)	185 F	09-14	4/1598	120/6000	118/4250	1075kg	113	9.1	-	126	127	52.3	+ Brilliant ride and composure; could be all the Mini you need - You'll still buy the S'	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (R56)	149 R	06-14	4/1598	181/5500	177/1600	1140kg	161	7.0	-	142	136	48.7	+ New engine, Mini quality - Front end not quite as direct as the old car's	★★★★★
Mini Cooper SD (R56)	158 D	11-14	4/1995	141/4000	225/1750	1150kg	125	8.0	-	134	114	65.7	+ A quick diesel Mini with impressive mpg - But no Cooper S alternative	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works (R56)	184 R	08-14	4/1598	208/6000	206/2000	1160kg	182	7.2	16.7	148	165	39.8	+ A seriously rapid Mini - Occasionally just a little unruly	★★★★★
Mini John Cooper Works GP (R56)	195 R	13-14	4/1598	215/6000	206/2000	1160kg	188	6.3	-	150	165	39.8	+ Brazenly hyperactive - Too much for some roads and some tastes	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S (R50)	077 R	02-06	4/1598	168/6000	155/4000	1140kg	143	7.8	19.9	135	-	33.6	+ Strong performance, quality feel - Over-long gearing	★★★★★
Mini Cooper S Works GP (R50)	144 R	06	4/1598	215/7000	184/4600	1090kg	200	6.5	-	149	-	32.8	+ Storming engine, agility - Tacky styling 'enhancements'	★★★★★
Nissan Juke Nismo RS	208 D	£21,650	4/1618	215/6000	206/3600	1315kg	166	7.0	-	137	165	39.2	+ Quirky character and bold styling - Not a match for a pukka hot hatch	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 2)	97-98	4/1587	103/6200	97/3500	865kg	121	8.8	-	121	-	34.0	-	+ Bargain no-frills thrills - Not as much fizz as original 1.3	★★★★★



Ratings ★ Thrill-free zone ★★ Tepid ★★★ Interesting ★★★★★ Seriously good ★★★★★★ A truly great car



Our Choice

Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy. This generation of Mégane has got better and better with every update, and the 275 is simply sublime. Optional Ohlins dampers and Cup 2 rubber (taken from the Trophy-R) aren't essential, but improve things even further.



Best of the Rest

The Golf R provides a more grown-up but still hugely entertaining alternative to the Mégane, while its relative, the SEAT Leon Cupra 280, is a real buzz, especially with the Sub8 pack (left) and sticky tyres. The Fiesta ST Mountune is our pick of the smaller hatches.

Superminis / Hot Hatches

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Peugeot 106 Rallye (Series 1)	095 R	'94-'96	4/1294	100/7200	80/5400	826kg	123	10.6	-	118	-	35.6	+ Frantic, thrashy fun - Needs caning to extract full potential	★★★★★
Peugeot 106 GTI 16v	034 R	'97-'04	4/1587	120/6600	107/5200	950kg	128	7.4	22.2	127	-	34.9	+ Fine handling supermini - Looks its age	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTI	184 R	£18,895	4/1598	197/5800	203/1700	1160kg	173	6.8	17.9	143	125	47.9	+ Agile chassis works well on tough roads - Could be more involving	★★★★★
Peugeot 208 GTI 30th Anniversary	211 R	£21,995	4/1598	205/6000	221/1750	1185kg	176	6.5	-	143	125	47.9	+ The most focused small hatch on sale - Nearly £4k more than a Fiesta ST Mountune	★★★★★
Peugeot 205 GTI 1.9	195 R	'88-'91	4/1905	130/6000	119/4750	910kg	145	7.9	-	124	-	36.7	+ Still scintillating after all these years - Brittle build quality	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 GTI 6	020 R	'93-'01	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1215kg	139	7.2	20.1	140	-	30.1	+ One of the great GTIs - They don't make them like this any more	★★★★★
Peugeot 306 Rallye	095 R	'98-'99	4/1998	167/6500	142/5500	1199kg	142	6.9	19.2	137	-	30.1	+ Essentially a GTI-6 for less dosh - Limited choice of colours	★★★★★
Renaultsport Twingo 133	175 R	'08-'13	4/1598	131/6750	118/4400	1050kg	127	8.6	-	125	150	43.5	+ Renaultsport experience for pocket money - Optional Cup chassis gives bouncy ride	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Auto	184 R	£18,995	4/1618	197/6000	177/1750	1204kg	166	6.9	17.9	143	144	44.8	+ Faster, more refined, easier to drive - We miss the revvy nat-asp engine and manual 'box	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 220 Trophy	213 R	£21,780	4/1618	217/6050	206/2000	1204kg	183	6.6	-	146	135	47.9	+ Improves on the 200 Auto - Still not a match for previous-generation Renaultsport Clios	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 200 Cup	195 R	'09-'13	4/1998	197/7100	159/5400	1204kg	166	6.6	16.7	141	190	34.5	+ The hot Clio at its best - They don't make it anymore	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 197 Cup	115 R	'07-'09	4/1998	194/7250	158/5550	1240kg	161	6.9	-	134	-	33.6	+ Quick, polished and capable - Not as much sheer fun as 182 Cup	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182	066 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1110kg	165	6.6	17.5	139	-	34.9	+ Took hot hatches to a new level - Flawed driving position	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 182 Cup	187 R	'04-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.5	-	139	-	34.9	+ Full of beans, fantastic value - Sunday-market upholstery	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio Trophy	200 R	'05-'06	4/1998	180/6500	148/5250	1090kg	168	6.6	17.3	140	-	34.9	+ The most fun you can have on three (sometimes two) wheels - Just 500 were built	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio 172 Cup	048 R	'02-'04	4/1998	170/6250	147/5400	1011kg	171	6.5	17.7	138	-	-	+ Bargain old-school hot hatch - Nervous in the wet, no ABS	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6 255	057 R	'03-'05	6/2946	251/7150	221/4650	1400kg	182	5.8	-	153	-	23.0	+ Supercar drama without the original's edgy handling - Uninspired interior	★★★★★
Renaultsport Clio V6	029 R	'99-'02	6/2946	227/6000	221/3750	1335kg	173	5.8	17.0	145	-	23.0	+ Pocket supercar - Mid-engined handling can be tricky	★★★★★
Renault Clio Williams	195 R	'93-'96	4/1988	148/6100	126/4500	981kg	153	7.6	20.8	134	-	26.0	+ One of the best hot hatches ever - Can be fragile	★★★★★
Renault 5 GT Turbo	195 R	'87-'91	4/1397	118/5750	122/3000	855kg	140	7.3	-	120	-	28.4	+ Clio Williams' grand-daddy - Few unmodified ones left	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy	212 R	£28,930	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1376kg	200	5.8	-	159	174	31.7	+ Another cracking Trophy model - Stripped-out Trophy-R is even more thrilling	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 275 Trophy-R	203 R	£36,430	4/1998	271/5500	265/3000	1297kg	212	5.8	-	158	174	31.7	+ As absorbing as a 911 GT3 RS on the right road - Too uncompromising for some, pricey	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	195 R	'12-'15	4/1998	261/5500	265/3000	1387kg	191	6.4	14.8	158	174	37.7	+ A hot hatch benchmark - Cupholder could be better positioned	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	139 R	'09-'12	4/1998	247/5500	251/3000	1387kg	181	6.1	14.6	156	190	34.4	+ Fantastic chassis... - partially obscured by new-found maturity	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane dCi 175 Cup	119 R	'07-'09	4/1995	173/3750	265/2000	1470kg	119	8.3	23.5	137	-	43.5	+ A diesel with a genuinely sporty chassis - Could take more power	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane 230 F1 Team R26	195 R	'07-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1345kg	171	6.2	16.0	147	-	-	+ The car the R26.R is based on - F1 Team stickers in dubious taste	★★★★★
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	200 R	'08-'09	4/1998	227/5500	229/3000	1220kg	189	5.8	15.1	147	-	-	+ One of the true hot hatch heroes - Two seats, plastic rear windows	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza FR 2.0 TDI	144 R	£17,445	4/1968	141/4200	236/1750	1245kg	115	8.2	-	131	123	60.1	+ More fun than the petrol FR, manual gearbox option - The Cupra's not much more	★★★★★
SEAT Ibiza Cupra	183 D	£18,765	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1259kg	144	6.9	-	142	139	47.9	+ Punchy engine, unflappable DSG - Lacks engagement	★★★★★
SEAT Leon FR TDI 184	184 D	£22,255	4/1968	181/4000	280/1750	1350kg	136	7.5	-	142	112	64.2	+ Performance, sweet chassis, economy, comfort - Boorish engine	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	212 R	£27,210	4/1984	276/5600	258/1750	1300kg	216	5.8	-	155	149	44.1	+ Serious pace and agility for Golf GTI money - The Mk7 Golf R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon FR+	163 D	'11-'12	4/1984	208/5300	206/1700	1334kg	158	7.2	-	145	170	38.7	+ As quick as a Golf GTI five-door but lots cheaper - Misses the VW's completeness	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R	139 R	'10-'12	4/1984	261/6000	258/2500	1375kg	193	6.1	14.0	155	190	34.9	+ Bold car, blinding engine - Lacks the character of its rival mega-hatches	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra	105 R	'07-'11	4/1984	237/5700	221/2200	1375kg	175	6.3	-	153	190	34.0	+ Great engine, composure - Doesn't have adjustability of old Cupra R	★★★★★
SEAT Leon Cupra R 225	067 R	'03-'06	4/1781	222/5900	206/2200	1376kg	164	6.9	-	150	-	32.1	+ Cross-country pace, practicality, value - Not as thrilling as some	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk2)	146 D	£17,150	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1218kg	148	7.3	-	139	148	45.6	+ Well priced, well made, with great engine and DSG 'box - Dull steering	★★★★★
Skoda Fabia vRS (Mk1)	077 R	'04-'07	4/1896	130/4000	229/1900	1315kg	100	9.6	-	127	-	55.4	+ Fascinatingly fun and frugal hot hatch - A little short on steering feel	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk3)	187 D	£23,260	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1350kg	163	6.8	-	154	142	45.6	+ Quick, agile, roomier than a Golf - Ride is harsh for what could be a family car	★★★★★
Skoda Octavia vRS (Mk2)	163 R	'06-'13	4/1998	197/5100	206/1700	1395kg	143	7.3	-	149	175	37.7	+ Drives like a GTI but costs much less - Green brake calipers?	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX	125 D	'08-'10	4/2457	251/5400	288/3000	1395kg	180	5.5	-	130	270	-	+ An improvement over the basic WRX - Still not the WRX we wanted	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI 330S	124 R	'08-'10	4/2457	325/5400	347/3400	1505kg	219	4.4	-	155	-	-	+ A bit quicker than the STI... - but not better	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk2)	175 R	£13,749	4/1586	134/6900	118/4400	1045kg	130	8.7	-	121	147	44.1	+ The Swift's still a great pocket rocket - But it's lost a little adjustability	★★★★★
Suzuki Swift Sport (Mk1)	132 R	'05-'11	4/1586	123/6800	109/4800	1030kg	121	8.9	-	124	165	39.8	+ Entertaining handling, well built - Lacking in steering feedback	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	211 R	£17,995	4/1598	202/5800	206/1900	1278kg	161	6.5	-	143	174	31.7	+ Begs to be wrung out - You'll need the £2400 Performance Pack	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR	154 R	'07-'14	4/1598	189/5850	192/1980	1166kg	165	6.8	-	140	172	38.7	+ Looks snazzy, punchy engine - Lacks feel, uncouth compared with rivals	★★★★★
Vauxhall Corsa VXR N'ring/Clubsport	164 R	'11-'13/14	4/1598	202/5750	206/2250	1166kg	176	6.5	-	143	178	-	+ VXR gets more power and a limited-slip diff - But they came at a price	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk2)	207 R	£27,315	4/1998	276/5500	295/2500	1475kg	190	5.9	-	155	184	34.9	+ Better than the car it replaces, loony turbo pace - Lacks RS Mégane's precision	★★★★★
Vauxhall Astra VXR (Mk1)	102 R	'05-'11	4/1998	237/5600	236/2400	1393kg	173	6.7	16.7	152	221	30.7	+ Fast and furious - Lacks a little composure and precision	★★★★★
VW Up/SEAT Mii/Skoda Citigo	171 R	£7990+	3/999	59/5000	70/3000	854kg	70	14.1	-	99	105	62.8	+ Accomplished city car is dynamically sound... - but predictably slow	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI	211 R	£18,850	4/1998	189/4200	236/1450	1280kg	150	6.7	-	146	139	47.1	+ Smooth and brawny - Fiesta ST is more engaging	★★★★★
VW Polo GTI	154 R	'10-'14	4/1390	178/6200	184/2000	1184kg	153	6.8	-	142	139	47.9	+ Modern-day mk1 Golf GTI gets twin-clutch DSG - It's a little bit bland	★★★★★
VW Golf GTD (Mk7)	200 D	£25,765	4/1968	181/3500	280/1750	1377kg	134	7.5	-	143	109	67.3	+ Pace, fuel economy, sounds good for a diesel - Lacks the extra edge of the GTI	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	207 R	£26,580	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1351kg	163	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Brilliantly resolved - Mégane 265 beats it as a pure drivers' car	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk7)	202 D	£28,000	4/1395	201	258	1524kg	134	7.6	-	138	35	188.0	+ The most enjoyable plug-in hybrid at this price - Golf GTI still quicker and more fun	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk7)	212 R	£29,900	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1476kg	204	5.1	-	155	165	40.9	+ A VW 'R' model you can take seriously - Mégane 275 just edges it as a pure drivers' car	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk6)	172 R	'09-'13	4/1984	207/5300	207/1700	1318kg	160	6.4	16.5	148	170	38.7	+ Still a very accomplished hot hatch - 207bhp isn't a lot any more	★★★★★
VW Golf R (Mk6)	140 D	'10-'13	4/1984	266/6000	258/2500	1521kg	178	5.5	-	155	199	33.2	+ Great engine, tremendous pace and poise - High price, ACC only optional	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk5)	195 R	'04-'09	4/1984	197/5100	207/1800	1336kg	150	5.7	17.9	145	-	-	+ Character and ability: the GTI's return to form - Lacking firepower?	★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk5)	087 R	'06-'09	6/3189	246/6300	236/2500	1510kg	165	5.8	15.2	155	-	26.4	+ Traction's great and you'll love the soundtrack - We'd still have a GTI	★★★★★
VW Golf R32 (Mk4)	053 R	'02-'04	6/3189	237/6250	236/2800	1477kg	163	6.4	16.3	154	-	24.6	+ Charismatic - Boomy engine can be tiresome	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI 16v (Mk2)	195 R	'88-'92	4/1781	139/6100	124/4600	960kg	147	7.9	-	129	-	26.6	+ Still feels everyday useable - Very hard to find a standard one	★★★★★
VW Golf GTI (Mk1, 1.8)	095 R	'82-'84	4/1781	112/5800	109/3500	840kg	135	8.1	-	112	-	36.0	+ The car that started it all - Tricky to find an unmolested one	★★★★★
Volvo C30 T5 R-Design	122 R	'08-'12	5/2521	227/5000	236/1500	1347kg	165	6.6	16.9	149	203	32.5	+ Good-looking, desirable Volvo - Lacks edge of best hatches. Avoid auto	★★★★★

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Our Choice

BMW M5. The turbocharging of BMW's M-cars met with scepticism, but the current M5's 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8 feels a perfect fit. It's a brutally fast car, and there are clever (and useable) adjustable driving modes. The '30 Jahre' special edition, which has an extra 40bhp, is especially worth a look.



Best of the Rest

Mercedes' E63 AMG offers intoxicating performance, especially with the S upgrade (pictured). BMW's M3 is an appealing all-round package, but its C63 AMG rival has more approachable limits. If you must have an SUV, take a look at BMW's X6 M or Porsche's Macan Turbo or Cayenne GTS.

Saloons / Estates / 4x4s

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Alpina D3 Biturbo (F30)	192 D	£46,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	+173mph from a 3-litre diesel! Brilliant chassis, too - Auto only	★★★★★
Alpina B3 Biturbo (F30)	188 D	£54,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1610kg	255	4.2	-	190	177	37.2	+ Understated appearance, monster performance - E90 M3 is better on the limit	★★★★★
Alpina D3 (E90)	120 R	'08-'12	4/1995	211/4000	332/2000	1495kg	143	6.9	-	152	-	52.3	+ Excellent chassis, turbodiesel oomph - Rather narrow powerband	★★★★★
Alpina B5 Biturbo	149 D	£75,150	8/4395	533/5200	538/2800	1920kg	282	4.5	-	198	244	26.9	+ Big performance and top-line luxury - Driver not really involved	★★★★★
Alpina B7 Biturbo	134 D	£98,800	8/4395	533/5200	538/2800	2040kg	265	4.6	-	194	230	28.5	+ Massive performance and top-line luxury - Feels its weight when hustled	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide S	201 D	£147,950	12/5935	552/6650	465/5500	1990kg	282	4.2	-	203	300	21.9	+ Oozes star quality; gearbox on 2015MY cars a big improvement - It's cosy in the back	★★★★★
Aston Martin Rapide	141 R	'10-'13	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1990kg	240	5.2	-	188	355	-	+ Better than its DB9 sibling - More a 2+2 than a proper four-seater	★★★★★
Audi S3 Saloon	192 D	£33,540	4/1984	296/5500	280/1800	1430kg	210	5.3	-	155	162	26.4	+ On paper a match for the original S4 - In reality much less interesting	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B8)	166 D	£39,610	6/2995	328/5500	324/2900	1685kg	198	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	+ Great powertrain, secure chassis - The RS4	★★★★★
Audi S4 (B7)	073 D	'05-'08	8/4163	339/7000	302/3500	1700kg	206	5.4	-	155	-	-	+ Effortless V8, agile handling - Lacks ultimate finesse of class leaders	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Avant (B8)	192 R	£56,545	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1795kg	251	4.5	10.5	174	249	26.4	+ Looks and sounds the part, thunderously fast - Harsh ride, unnatural steering	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B7)	088 R	'05-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1650kg	255	4.5	10.9	155	-	-	+ 414bhp at 7800rpm! And there's an estate version too - Busy under braking	★★★★★
Audi RS4 (B5)	192 R	'00-'02	6/2671	375/6100	325/2500	1620kg	236	4.8	12.1	170	-	17.0	+ Effortless pace - Not the last word in agility. Bends wheel rims	★★★★★
Audi RS2	214 R	'94-'95	5/2226	315/6500	302/3000	1595kg	201	4.8	13.1	162	-	18.0	+ Storming performance (thanks to Porsche) - Try finding one	★★★★★
Audi S6	091 D	'06-'11	10/5204	429/6800	398/3000	1910kg	228	5.2	-	155	299	22.4	+ Even faster, and discreet with it - Very muted V10	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C7)	203 R	£77,995	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1935kg	290	3.6	8.2	155	229	28.8	+ Performance, foolproof powertrain, looks - Feels a bit one-dimensional	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C6)	116 R	'08-'10	10/4991	572/6250	479/1500	2025kg	287	4.3	9.7	155	333	20.2	+ The world's most powerful estate - Power isn't everything	★★★★★
Audi RS6 Avant (C5)	052 R	'02-'04	8/4172	444/5700	413/1950	1865kg	242	4.8	11.6	155	-	19.3	+ The ultimate estate car? - Numb steering	★★★★★
Audi RS7	208 R	£84,480	8/3993	552/5700	516/1750	1920kg	292	3.9	-	155	229	28.8	+ Stonking performance, great looks - Numb driving experience	★★★★★
Audi S7	171 D	£63,375	8/3993	414/5000	406/1400	1945kg	216	4.6	-	155	225	-	+ Looks and drives better than S6 it's based on - Costs £8000 more	★★★★★
Audi S8	164 D	£80,690	8/3993	513/5800	479/1700	1975kg	264	4.1	-	155	237	27.1	+ Quicker and much more economical than before - But still underwhelming to drive	★★★★★
Audi RS Q3	206 D	£45,495	5/2480	335/5300	332/1600	1655kg	206	4.8	-	155	203	32.1	+ Surprisingly characterful; better than many RSs - High centre of gravity	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur V8	200 D	£142,800	8/3997	500/6000	487/1700	2342kg	217	4.9	-	183	254	25.9	+ Effortless performance with real top-end kick - Determinedly unsporting	★★★★★
Bentley Flying Spur	185 D	£153,300	12/5998	616/6000	590/1600	2400kg	261	4.3	-	200	343	19.0	+ More power than old Flying Spur Speed - Feels its weight; engine sounds dull	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne	178 F	£229,360	8/6752	505/4200	752/1750	2610kg	197	5.1	-	184	342	19.3	+ Drives like a modern Bentley should - Shame it doesn't look like one too	★★★★★
Bentley Mulsanne Speed	210 D	£252,000	8/6752	530/4200	811/1750	2610kg	206	4.8	-	190	342	19.3	+ Characterful; superb build quality - A bit pricey...	★★★★★
BMW 320d (F30)	168 R	£29,475	4/1995	181/4000	280/1750	1495kg	123	7.4	-	146	120	61.4	+ Fleet-friendly new Three is economical yet entertaining - It's a tad noisy	★★★★★
BMW 328i (F30)	165 D	£30,470	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1430kg	172	5.8	-	155	149	44.8	+ New-age four-pot 328i is great all-rounder - We miss the six-cylinder soundtrack	★★★★★
BMW 330d M Sport (F30)	180 D	£36,975	6/2993	254/4000	413/2000	1540kg	168	5.6	-	155	129	57.6	+ Great engine, fine handling, good value - Steering confuses weight with feel	★★★★★
BMW 435i Gran Coupe	203 D	£41,865	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1585kg	194	5.5	-	155	174	34.9	+ Superb straight-six, fine ride/handling balance - 335i saloon weighs and costs less	★★★★★
BMW M3 (F80)	211 R	£56,590	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1520kg	284	4.1	8.6	155	204	32.1	+ Looks, performance, practicality - Body control on rough roads; engine lacks character	★★★★★
BMW M3 (E90)	123 R	'08-'11	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1605kg	262	4.9	10.7	165	290	22.8	+ Every bit as good as the E92 M3 coupe - No carbon roof	★★★★★
BMW M3 CRT (E90)	179 R	'11-'12	8/4361	444/8300	334/3750	1580kg	285	4.4	-	180	295	-	+ Saloon chassis + weight savings + GTS engine = best E90 M3 - Just 67 were made	★★★★★
BMW 528i (F10)	164 D	£36,570	4/1997	242/5000	258/1250	1710kg	144	6.2	-	155	152	41.5	+ Four-pot 528i is downsizing near its best - You'll miss the straight-six sound effects	★★★★★
BMW 535i (F10)	141 D	£44,560	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1685kg	182	6.1	-	155	185	34.9	+ New 5-series impresses... - But only with all the chassis options ticked	★★★★★
BMW M5 (F10M)	208 R	£73,960	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1870kg	300	4.3	-	155	232	28.5	+ Twin-turbocharging suits all-new M5 well - Can feel heavy at times	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E60)	129 R	'04-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1755kg	289	4.7	10.4	155	-	19.6	+ Close to being the ultimate supersaloon - SMG gearbox feels old-tech	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E39)	110 R	'99-'03	8/4941	394/6600	369/3800	1795kg	223	4.9	11.5	155	-	-	+ Magnificent V8-engined supersaloon - We'd be nit-picking	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E34)	110 R	'92-'96	6/3795	340/6900	295/4750	1653kg	209	5.9	13.6	155	-	-	+ The Godfather of supersaloons - The family can come too	★★★★★
BMW M5 (E28)	182 R	'86-'88	6/3453	282/6500	251/4500	1431kg	200	6.2	-	151	-	-	+ The original storming saloon - Understated looks	★★★★★
BMW M6 Gran Coupe	190 D	£98,145	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1875kg	299	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	+ Enormous performance, stylish looks - Price tag looks silly next to rivals, M5 included	★★★★★
BMW X5 M50d	191 D	£64,525	6/2993	376/4000	546/2000	2190kg	155	5.3	-	155	173	42.8	+ Straight-line pace - Driving experience identical to standard X5, despite the M badge	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	212 D	£93,080	8/4395	567/6000	553/2200	2265kg	245	4.2	-	155	258	25.4	+ Big improvement on its predecessor - Coupe roofline still of questionable taste	★★★★★
BMW X6 M	134 D	'09-'15	8/4395	547/6000	502/1500	2305kg	241	4.7	-	171	325	20.3	+ Fast, refined and comfortable - But it definitely lacks the M factor	★★★★★
BMW 750i	174 D	£71,575	8/4395	449/5500	480/2000	2020kg	226	4.7	-	155	199	-	+ Well specced, impressively refined - Lags far behind the Mercedes S-class	★★★★★
Brabus Bullit	119 R	£330,000	12/6233	720/5100	811/2100	1850kg	395	3.8	-	217	-	-	+ Seven hundred and twenty bhp - Three hundred thousand pounds	★★★★★
Cadillac CTS-V	148 R	£67,030	8/6162	556/6100	551/3800	1928kg	293	3.9	-	191	365	18.1	+ It'll stand out among M-cars and AMGs - But the novelty might wear off	★★★★★
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth 4x4	141 R	'90-'93	4/1993	220/6250	214/3500	1305kg	159	6.6	-	144	-	24.4	+ Fast and furious - Try finding a straight one	★★★★★
Ford Sierra RS Cosworth	'86-'90	4/1993	204/6000	204/4500	1220kg	169	6.2	-	143	-	-	-	+ Road-going Group A racecar - Don't shout about the power output!	★★★★★
Honda Accord Type R	012 R	'98-'03	4/2157	209/7200	158/6700	1306kg	163	6.1	17.4	142	-	29.4	+ One of the finest front-drivers of all time - Lack of image	★★★★★
Infiniti Q50S Hybrid	195 D	£39,995	6/3498	359/6800	402/5000	1750kg	208	5.1	-	155	144	45.6	+ Good powertrain, promising chassis - Lacklustre steering, strong rivals	★★★★★
Jaguar XE S	213 D	£44,865	6/2995	335/6500	332/4500	1590kg	214	4.9	-	155	194	34.9	+ Great chassis; neat design - V6 loses appeal in the real world	★★★★★
Jaguar XF S (2015MY)	214 D	£49,945	6/2995	375/6500	332/4500	1635kg	233	5.0	-	155	198	34.0	+ Outstanding ride and handling balance - Engine lacks appeal	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR	181 D	£65,440	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1800kg	284	4.8	10.2	155	270	24.4	+ Brilliant blend of pace and refinement - Doesn't sound as special as it is	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S	208 R	£79,995	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1800kg	306	4.4	-	186	270	24.4	+ XF gets turned up to 12 - Starting to feel its age	★★★★★
Jaguar XFR-S Sportbrake	203 R	£82,495	8/5000	542/6500	501/2500	1892kg	291	4.6	-	186	297	22.2	+ Looks fantastic, huge performance, nice balance - Not as sharp as the saloon	★★★★★
Jaguar XJ 3.0 V6 Diesel	148 D	£56,870	6/2993	271/4000	442/2000	1700kg	162	6.0	-	155	167	46.3	+ A great Jaguar - But not as great as the XJR...	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	191 D	£92,395	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1805kg	302	4.4	-	174	270	24.4	+ Hot-rod vibe, fine cabin - Opinion-dividing looks	★★★★★
Jaguar XJR	054 R	'03-'09	8/4196	400/6100	408/3500	1665kg	244	5.0	-	155	-	23.0	+ Genuine 7-series rival - 2007 facelift didn't help middle-aged image	★★★★★

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Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Land Rover Discovery Sport	205 D	£32,395	4/2179	187/3500	310/1750	1863kg	100	9.8	-	117	159	46.3	+ Style, packaging, refinement - Will need to prove Sport tag in UK	★★★★★
Lexus IS F	151 R	'07-'12	8/4969	417/6600	372/5200	1714kg	247	4.7	10.9	173	270	24.4	+ Shockingly good Lexus - The M3's available as a (second hand) four-door too	★★★★★
Lotus Carlton	170 R	'91-'93	6/3615	377/5200	419/4200	1658kg	231	4.8	10.6	176	-	17.0	+ The Millennium Falcon of saloon cars - Every drive a work-out	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli	186 D	£52,615	6/2979	325/5000	406/1750	1810kg	182	5.6	-	163	223	29.4	+ Bursting with character; good value compared to Quattroporte - It's still a big car	★★★★★
Maserati Ghibli S	198 D	£63,760	6/2979	404/5500	406/4500	1810kg	227	5.0	-	177	242	27.2	+ Stands out from the crowd; sounds good too - Chassis lacks finesse, engine lacks reach	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	184 D	£80,115	6/2979	404/5500	406/1750	1860kg	221	5.1	-	177	242	27.2	+ Tempting alternative to V8 - Feel-free steering, secondary ride lacks decorum	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte GTS	179 D	£108,185	8/3798	523/6800	479/2250	1900kg	280	4.7	-	190	274	23.9	+ Performance, sense of occasion - Lacks the charisma and edge of its predecessor	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte S	137 R	'08-'12	8/4691	425/7000	361/4750	1990kg	216	5.1	12.1	174	365	18.0	+ A QP with the bhp it deserves - Grille is a bit Hannibal Lecter	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	141 R	'08-'12	8/4691	433/7000	361/4750	1990kg	221	5.1	-	177	365	18.0	+ The most stylish supersaloon - Slightly wooden brakes, unforgiving ride	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte	085 R	'04-'08	8/4244	394/7000	333/4500	1930kg	207	5.1	-	171	-	17.9	+ Redefines big-car dynamics - Don't use auto mode	★★★★★
Maserati Quattroporte Sport GTS	113 D	'07-'08	8/4244	396/7000	339/4250	1930kg	208	5.5	-	167	-	-	+ Best Quattroporte chassis so far - More power wouldn't go amiss	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz 190E 2.5-16	185 F	'89-'92	4/2498	201/6750	177/5500	1360kg	147	7.2	-	142	-	24.4	+ M-B's M3 alternative - Not as nimble as the Beemer	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLA 45 AMG	186 D	£42,270	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.6	-	155	161	31.0	+ Strong performance, classy cabin - Priced compared to A45 AMG hatchback	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz GLA 45 AMG	205 R	£44,595	4/1991	355/6000	332/2250	1510kg	239	4.8	-	155	175	37.7	+ An aggressive and focused sports crossover - Low on driver interaction	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63	209 D	£59,800	8/3982	469/5500	479/1750	1640kg	291	4.1	-	155	192	34.5	+ Fast and feelsome - Lacks the ultimate finesse and response of the C63 S	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG C63 S	211 R	£66,545	8/3982	503/5500	516/1750	1655kg	309	4.0	-	155	192	34.5	+ Tremendous twin-turbo V8 power - Not quite as focused as an M division car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG	151 R	'07-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	9.7	160	280	23.5	+ Monstrous pace and extremely engaging - Same-era M3 is just a little better...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz C55 AMG	088 R	'04-'08	8/5439	367/5250	376/4000	1635kg	228	5.2	-	155	-	23.7	+ Furiously fast, commendably discreet - Overshadowed by M3 and RS4	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63	187 D	£74,115	8/5461	549/5500	531/1750	1770kg	315	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Power, response and accuracy in spades - A little lacking in originality	★★★★★
Mercedes-AMG E63 S	208 R	£84,710	8/5461	571/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	229	28.8	+ Effortless power; intuitive and approachable - Dim-witted auto 'box	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	165 R	'11-'13	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	1765kg	298	4.2	-	155	230	28.8	+ Turbo engine doesn't dilute E63 experience - Sometimes struggles for traction...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W212)	134 D	'09-'11	8/6208	518/6800	465/5200	1765kg	298	4.5	-	155	295	22.4	+ As below, but with an extra 1lbhp and squarer headlights - Steering still vague	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG (W211)	096 R	'06-'09	8/6208	507/6800	465/5200	1765kg	292	4.5	-	155	-	19.8	+ Brilliant engine, indulgent chassis - Vague steering, speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E55 AMG	052 R	'03-'06	8/5439	476/6100	516/2650	1760kg	271	4.8	10.2	155	-	21.9	+ M5-humbling grunt, cossetting ride - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG L	191 D	£119,835	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.4	-	155	237	27.9	+ Monster pace - Average steering feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	148 D	'10-'13	8/5461	536/5500	590/2000	2040kg	267	4.5	-	155	244	26.9	+ Massive torque, massively reduced emissions - Massive car	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS 63 AMG S	199 D	£86,500	8/5461	571/5500	590/1750	1795kg	327	4.1	-	155	231	28.5	+ Remains quick and characterful - Dated gearbox, no four-wheel drive option in the UK	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS 63 AMG	178 R	'11-'14	8/5461	518/5250	516/1700	1795kg	293	4.2	-	155	231	28.5	+ Monster performance, 549bhp on option - Not as desirable as a Bentley or Aston	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz CLS 63 AMG	099 R	'06-'11	8/6208	507/6100	464/2650	1905kg	270	4.5	-	155	345	19.5	+ Beauty, comfort, awesome performance - M5 has the edge on B-roads	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG S Coupe	212 D	£96,555	8/5461	571/5500	560/1750	2275kg	258	4.2	-	155	278	23.7	+ Subtler than an X6 M - More force than finesse	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz ML63 AMG	176 R	£127,005	8/5461	518/5250	516/1750	2270kg	232	4.7	-	155	276	23.9	+ Great engine, surprisingly good dynamics - £85K buys a Boxster and an ML350...	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz G63 AMG	172 D	£184,000	8/5461	537/5500	560/2000	2475kg	220	5.4	-	130	322	-	+ It exists: epic soundtrack - Ancient chassis, silly price	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-300 SST	118 R	'08-'13	4/1998	290/6500	300/3500	1590kg	185	5.2	13.9	155	256	26.2	+ Evo gets twin-clutch transmission - Not as exciting as it used to be	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-360	122 D	'08-'13	4/1998	354/6500	363/3500	1560kg	231	4.1	-	155	328	19.9	+ Ridiculously rapid new Evo - A five-speed gearbox?!	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-330 SST	134 R	'08-'12	4/1998	324/6500	322/3500	1590kg	207	4.4	-	155	256	-	+ Great engine and gearbox combo - It still lives in the shadow of the Evo IX	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	181 R	'09-'10	4/1998	403/6500	387/3500	1560kg	262	3.8	-	155	328	-	+ Most powerful factory Evo ever... - About X grand too much when new	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX FQ-340	088 R	'05-'07	4/1997	345/6800	321/4600	1400kg	250	4.3	10.9	157	-	-	+ Gives Porsche drivers nightmares - Points. Lots of	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo IX MR FQ-360	181 R	'05-'07	4/1997	366/6887	363/3200	1400kg	266	3.9	-	157	-	-	+ Well-executed engine upgrades - Prison food	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII	055 R	'03-'04	4/1997	276/6500	289/3500	1410kg	199	5.1	-	157	-	-	+ The Evo grows up - Brakes need beefing up	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VIII MR FQ-300	057 R	'03-'05	4/1997	305/6800	289/3500	1400kg	221	4.8	-	157	-	20.5	+ Extra pace, extra attitude - Extra money	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII	031 R	'02-'03	4/1997	276/6500	282/3500	1360kg	206	5.0	13.0	140	-	20.4	+ Terrific all-rounder - You tell us	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VII RS Sprint	041 D	'02-'03	4/1997	320/6500	327/6200	1260kg	258	4.4	-	150	-	-	+ Ruthlessly focused road weapon - For the truly committed	★★★★★
Mitsubishi Evo VI Mäkinen Edition	200 R	'00-'01	4/1997	276/6500	275/2750	1365kg	205	4.6	-	150	-	-	+ Our favourite Evo - Subtle it is not	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera 4S	186 D	£86,080	6/2997	414/6000	383/1750	1870kg	225	4.8	-	177	208	31.7	+ Strong performance and typically fine Porsche chassis - Misses characterful V8 of old 'S'	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera GTS	208 R	£93,391	8/4806	434/6700	383/3500	1925kg	229	4.4	-	178	249	26.4	+ Vivacious V8, entertaining balance - Can feel light on performance next to turbo'd rivals	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo	137 R	£108,006	8/4806	493/6000	516/2250	1970kg	254	3.6	8.9	188	270	24.6	+ Fast, refined and dynamically sound - It still leaves us cold	★★★★★
Porsche Panamera Turbo S	159 D	'11-'13	8/4806	442/6000	590/2250	1995kg	276	3.7	-	190	270	24.6	+ Pace, excellent ergonomics - Steering feel, ride	★★★★★
Porsche Macan S	205 R	£43,648	6/2997	335/5500	339/1450	1865kg	183	5.4	-	157	204	31.4	+ No less compelling than the Turbo - Although lacks its ultimate speed and agility	★★★★★
Porsche Macan Turbo	207 D	£59,648	6/3604	394/6000	406/1350	1925kg	208	4.5	11.1	165	208	30.7	+ Doesn't feel like an SUV - Still not a match for a proper sports saloon	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V6)	211 D	£72,523	6/3604	434/6000	442/1600	2110kg	209	5.2	-	163	228	28.3	+ The driver's Cayenne... - ...but why would a driver want an SUV?	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne GTS (Mk2, V8)	173 D	'12-'15	8/4806	414/6500	380/3500	2085kg	202	5.6	-	162	251	26.4	+ Dynamically the best SUV of its era - At two tons, it's still no sports car	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo (Mk2)	212 D	£93,574	8/4806	513/6000	533/2250	2185kg	239	4.5	-	173	261	25.2	+ Remarkable performance, handling, completeness - Vague steering, dated engine	★★★★★
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (Mk2)	184 D	£118,455	8/4806	562/6000	590/2500	2235kg	255	4.1	-	176	267	24.6	+ More power and torque than a Zonda S 7.3 - In an SUV	★★★★★
Range Rover Evoque Coupe Si4	160 D	£46,660	4/1999	237/6000	251/1900	1670kg	144	7.0	-	135	199	-	+ Striking looks, sporting dynamics - Zonda Si4, and petrol version is auto-only	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport V8 Supercharged	186 D	£84,350	8/5000	503/6000	460/2500	2335kg	219	5.0	-	155	298	21.7	+ Deceptively quick and capable sports SUV - It's still got a weight problem	★★★★★
Range Rover Sport SVR	212 D	£95,150	8/5000	542/6000	501/3500	2335kg	236	4.5	-	162	298	21.7	+ Characterful drivetrain; genuine off-road luxury - Not a match for its rivals on the road	★★★★★
Range Rover SDV8	180 D	£80,850	8/4367	334/3500	516/1750	2360kg	144	6.5	-	140	229	32.5	+ Lighter, more capable, even more luxurious - Diesel V6 model feels more alert	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Ghost	186 D	£216,864	12/6592	563/5250	575/1500	2360kg	242	4.7	-	155	317	20.8	+ It's quicker than you think - It's more enjoyable driven slowly	★★★★★
Rolls-Royce Phantom	054 R	£310,200	12/6749	453/5350	531/3500	2560kg	180	5.7	-	149	377	18.0	+ Rolls reinvented for the 21st Century - The roads are barely big enough	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	201 R	£28,995	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1534kg	196	5.2	-	158	242	27.2	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns (again) - Without a power increase	★★★★★
Subaru WRX STI	151 D	'10-'13	4/2457	296/6000	300/4000	1505kg	200	5.1	-	158	243	26.9	+ Fast Subaru saloon returns - Without the blue paint and gold wheels	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX GB270	109 D	'07	4/2457	266/5700	310/3000	1410kg	192	5.2	-	143	-	-	+ Fitting final fling for 'classic' Impreza - End of an era	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI	090 R	'05-'07	4/2457	276/6000	289/4000	1495kg	188	5.3	-	158	-	25.9	+ Stunning to drive - Not so stunning to look at	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza STI Spec C *	084 D	'05-'07	4/1994	320/6730	311/3500	1350kg	240	4.3	-	157	-	-	+ Lighter, faster, fiercer - The need for self-restraint	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB320	105 R	'07	4/2457	316/6000	332/3750	1495kg	215	4.8	-	155	-	-	+ Fitting tribute to a rallying legend - Too hardcore for some?	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza WRX STI PPP	073 R	'03-'05	4/1994	300/6000	299/4000	1470kg	207	5.2	12.9	148	-	-	+ A Subaru with real edge - Bit too edgy in the wet	★★★★★
Subaru STI Type RA Spec C *	067 R	'03-'05	4/1994	335/7000	280/3750	1380kg	247	4.3	11.1	160	-	-	+ Best Impreza since the PI - Lost its throbby flat-four voice	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Turbo	011 R	'98-'00	4/1994	215/5600	214/4000	1235kg	177	5.4	14.6	144	-	27.2	+ Destined for classic status - Thirsty	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza Pi	200 R	'00-'01	4/1994	276/6500	260/4000	1283kg	219	4.9	13.3	150	-	25.0	+ Ultimate old-shape Impreza - Prices reflect this	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza RB5 (PPP)	187 R	'99	4/1994	237/6000	258/3500	1235kg	195	5.0	14.1	143	-	-	+ Perfect blend of poise and power - Limited numbers	★★★★★
Subaru Impreza 22B	188 R	'98-'99	4/2212	276/6000	265/3200	1270kg	220	5.0	13.1	150	-	-	+ The ultimate Impreza - Doesn't come cheap	★★★★★
Tesla Model S P85D	208 D	£79,080	515kW	691	687	2239kg	314	3.2	-	155	0	n/a	+ Dual motors and 4WD equals extraordinary acceleration - Lack of charging points	★★★★★
Tesla Model S Performance	196 R	'14	310kW	416	442	2100kg	201	4.2	-	130	0	n/a	+ Intoxicating performance, soothing refinement - Generic styling, charging limitations	★★★★★
Vauxhall Insignia VXR SuperSport	189 D	£29,824	6/2792	321/5250	321/5250	1825kg	179	5.6	-	170	249	26.6	+ A 100mph Vauxhall - Should be a more engaging steer	★★★★★
Vauxhall Vectra VXR	102 D	'06-'09	6/2792	276/5500	262/1800	1580kg	177	6.1	-	161	-	27.4	+ Great engine, effortless pace, good value - Numb steering, lumpy ride	★★★★★
Vauxhall VXR8 GTS	208 R	£54,499	8/6162	576/6150	545/3850	1834kg	319	4.2	-	155	363	18.5	+ Monster engine; engaging driving experience - Woeful interior	★★★★★
Volvo V60 Polestar	197 D	£49,775	6/2953	345/5250	369/3000	1759kg	199	5.0	-	1				

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Our Choice

Porsche Boxster Spyder. The Boxster is the benchmark in its class for a good reason: it's simply a fabulous all-rounder. The new Spyder, which gets the 3.8-litre engine from the 911 Carrera S, would be our pick, but the 3.4-litre GTS and S, and even the basic 2.7, are all true five-star cars, too.



Best of the Rest

Lotus's Elise S Roadster counters the Boxster with a more focused driving experience, while the more-affordable Elise continues to defy its age. Jaguar's F-type also impresses in both V6 (left) and V8 forms, but for the ultimate thrills, get a Caterham 620R, Ariel Atom or Radical.

Sports Cars / Convertibles

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Alfa Romeo 4C Spider	211 D	\$59,500	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	940kg	256	4.5	-	160	161	40.9	+ Stunningly beautiful; better steering than coupe - Still has the coupe's other foibles	★★★★☆
Alfa Romeo 8C Spider	161 R	'09-'11	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1675kg	273	4.5	-	181	-	-	+ Beauty meets beast. They hit it off - Boot is useless for touring	★★★★★
Alpina D4 Biturbo Convertible	212 D	\$54,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1815kg	193	5.0	-	171	156	47.9	+ As much torque as a 997 Turbo - A diesel convertible wouldn't be our choice of Alpina	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5 Supercharged	180 D	£38,000	4/1998	310/8400	169/7200	550kg	573	2.7	-	155	-	-	+ As mad as ever - Rain	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.5R	198 R	£64,800	4/1998	350/8400	243/6100	550kg	647	2.6	-	155	-	-	+ Remarkable balance, poise and pace - Pricey	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3.24S	113 D	'08-'12	4/1998	245/8200	155/5200	500kg	498	3.2	-	150	-	33.0	+ The Atom just got a little bit better - Can still be a bit draughty...	★★★★★
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	138 R	'09-'12	4/1998	300/8200	162/7200	550kg	554	3.3	-	155	-	-	+ It's brilliant - It's mental	★★★★★
Ariel Atom Mugen	165 R	'12-'13	4/1998	270/8300	188/6000	550kg	499	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Perfect engine for the Atom's chassis - Only ten were made	★★★★★
Ariel Atom V8 500	165 R	'10-'12	8/3000	475/10,500	284/7750	550kg	877	3.0	5.8	170	-	-	+ An experience unlike anything else on Planet Car - £150K for an Atom	★★★★★
Ariel Nomad	210 R	£33,000	4/2354	235/7200	221/4300	670kg	365	3.4	-	134	-	-	+ Off-road capabilities make for a super plaything - No Bluetooth	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	130 R	£89,994	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1710kg	250	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	+ Sportiest, coolest drop-top Aston in years - Starting to feel its age	★★★★★
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S Roadster	161 R	£108,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1690kg	258	4.6	-	189	299	21.9	+ Sounds amazing, looks even better - Still not the best drop-top in its class	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S Roadster	212 R	£147,000	12/5935	565/6750	457/5750	1745kg	329	4.1	-	201	343	19.2	+ A brilliant two-seat roadster... - let down by a frustrating gearbox	★★★★★
Aston Martin V12 Vantage Roadster	175 R	'12-'14	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1760kg	294	4.4	-	190	-	-	+ As good as the coupe, with amplified V12 rumble - Just a smidgen shakier	★★★★★
Aston Martin DB9 Volante	150 D	£141,995	12/5935	470/6000	443/5000	1815kg	263	4.6	-	190	368	18.2	+ Consume a cruiser and capable when pushed - Roof-up wind noise	★★★★★
Aston Martin DBS Volante	133 D	'09-'12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1810kg	286	4.3	-	191	388	17.3	+ A feelgood car par excellence - It's a bit of a heavyweight	★★★★★
Audi TT S Roadster	207 D	£41,085	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1450kg	214	5.2	-	155	169	38.7	+ A serious proposition, ranking close behind a Boxster S - Coupe still looks better	★★★★★
Audi TT S Roadster	122 D	'08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1455kg	187	5.6	-	155	189	34.9	+ Effortlessly quick - Long-term appeal open to question	★★★★★
Audi TT RS Roadster	133 D	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1510kg	225	4.7	-	155	212	31.0	+ Terrific engine... - is the best thing about it	★★★★★
Audi S5 Cabriolet	130 D	£46,170	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1875kg	178	5.6	-	155	199	33.2	+ Gets the S4's trick supercharged engine - Bordering on dull	★★★★★
Audi RS5 Cabriolet	179 D	£69,505	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1920kg	235	4.9	-	155	249	26.4	+ Pace, looks, interior, naturally aspirated V8 - Not the last word in fun or involvement	★★★★★
Audi RS4 Cabriolet	094 D	'06-'08	8/4163	414/7800	317/5500	1845kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	+ That engine - Wibble wobble, wibble wobble, jelly on a plate	★★★★★
Audi R8 V8 Spyder	186 D	'11-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/6000	1660kg	259	4.8	-	187	337	19.6	+ More delicate and subtle than the V10 - The V10 sounds even better	★★★★★
BAC Mono	189 R	£124,255	4/2261	280/7700	206/6000	540kg	527	2.8	-	170	-	-	+ The most single-minded track car available - That means no passengers...	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 Convertible	168 R	£150,200	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2395kg	212	4.7	-	187	254	25.9	+ One of the world's best topless GTs - Still no sports car	★★★★★
Bentley Continental GT V8 S Convertible	194 D	£160,500	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2395kg	221	4.5	-	191	258	25.4	+ A true driver's Bentley - Excessively heavy; feels like it could give more	★★★★★
Bentley Conti GT Speed Convertible	187 D	£181,000	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2420kg	263	4.1	-	203	347	19.0	+ Effortless performance, style - Running costs a tad on the high side	★★★★★
Bentley Continental Supersports	147 D	'10-'12	12/5998	621/6000	590/2000	2395kg	263	3.9	-	202	388	17.3	+ Fast, capable and refined - Coupe does the Supersports thing better	★★★★★
BMW M235i Convertible	207 D	£37,710	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1600kg	204	5.2	-	155	199	33.2	+ Neat styling; great drivetrain - Loss of dynamic ability compared with coupe	★★★★★
BMW Z4 sDrive 35i M Sport (Mk2)	186 D	£43,005	6/2979	302/5800	295/1300	1505kg	204	5.2	-	155	219	30.1	+ Looks, hard-top versatility, drivetrain - Clumsy chassis is upset by ragged surfaces	★★★★★
BMW Z4 3.0si (Mk1)	094 D	'06-'09	6/2996	265/6600	232/2750	1310kg	205	5.7	-	155	-	32.9	+ Terrific straight-six - Handling not as playful as we'd like	★★★★★
BMW Z4 M Roadster	091 R	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1410kg	244	4.8	-	155	-	23.3	+ Exhilarating and characterful, that engine - Stiff suspension	★★★★★
BMW M Roadster	002 R	'98-'02	6/3246	325/7400	258/4900	1375kg	240	5.3	-	155	-	25.4	+ Fresh-air M3, that motor, hunky looks - M Coupe drives better	★★★★★
BMW 435i Convertible	194 D	£45,680	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1740kg	176	5.6	-	155	190	34.8	+ Impressive chassis, smart looks, neat roof - Extra weight, not as composed as coupe	★★★★★
BMW M4 Convertible (F83)	202 D	£61,145	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1750kg	247	4.6	-	155	213	31.0	+ As good as fast four-seat drop-tops get... - but still not as good as a coupe or saloon	★★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible (E93)	119 D	'08-'13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1810kg	232	5.3	-	155	297	22.2	+ M DCT transmission, pace, slick roof - Extra weight blunts the edge	★★★★★
BMW M3 Convertible (E46)	035 D	'01-'06	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1655kg	207	5.3	-	155	-	23.3	+ That engine - Gets the wobbles on British B-roads	★★★★★
BMW Z8	026 R	'00-'03	8/4941	400/6600	369/3800	1585kg	256	4.8	11.1	155	-	14.4	+ M5-powered super-sportsster - M5's more fun to drive	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 160	198 R	£19,710	4/660	80/7000	79/3400	490kg	166	6.5	-	100	-	-	+ The fabulous Seven formula at its most basic - Gets pricey with options	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 270	209 R	£23,795	4/1595	135/6800	122/4100	540kg	254	5.0	-	122	-	-	+ Feisty engine, sweetly balanced, manic and exciting - The temptation of more power	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 360	209 R	£27,795	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	560kg	327	4.8	-	130	-	-	+ Extra power is welcome - You'll need the six-speed gearbox to make the most of it	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 420	214 R	£30,795	4/1999	210/7600	150/6300	560kg	381	4.3	-	136	-	-	+ It's the one we built for ourselves - Trickier on the limit than lesser-powered Sevens	★★★★★
Caterham Seven 620R	187 R	£50,795	4/1999	310/7700	219/7350	545kg	578	2.8	-	155	-	-	+ Banzai on track, yet still relevant on the road - £50k for a Seven?	★★★★★
Caterham Seven CSR	094 R	£47,295	4/2261	256/7500	200/6200	565kg	460	3.8	-	155	-	-	+ Brilliant for high days, holidays and trackdays - Wet Wednesdays	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Roadsport 125	105 R	'07-'14	4/1595	125/6100	120/5350	539kg	235	5.9	-	112	-	-	+ Great debut for new Ford-engined model - Bigger drivers need SV model	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport	165 R	'11-'14	4/1595	140/6900	120/5790	520kg	273	4.9	-	120	-	-	+ One of the best Caterhams is also one of the cheapest of its era - It's quite minimalist	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Supersport R	180 D	'13-'14	4/1999	180/7300	143/6100	535kg	342	4.8	-	130	-	-	+ One of the best road-and-track Sevens - Impractical, noisy, uncomfortable	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R300	150 R	'09-'12	4/1999	175/7000	139/6000	515kg	345	4.5	-	140	-	-	+ Possibly all the Caterham you need - They're not cheap	★★★★★
Caterham Seven Superlight R500	123 R	'08-'14	4/1999	263/8500	177/7200	506kg	528	2.9	-	150	-	-	+ Better power-to-weight ratio than a Veyron - Until you add the driver	★★★★★
Caterham Levante	131 R	'09-'10	8/2398	550/10000	300/8500	520kg	1074	4.8	8.2	150	-	-	+ Twice the power-to-weight ratio of a Veyron! - Not easy to drive slowly	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R300	068 R	'02-'06	4/1796	160/7000	130/5000	500kg	325	4.7	-	130	-	-	+ Our 2002 Trackday Car of the Year - Not for wimps	★★★★★
Caterham Seven R500	200 R	'99-'06	4/1796	230/8600	155/7200	460kg	510	3.6	8.8	146	-	-	+ The K-series Seven at its very best - No cup holders	★★★★★
Donkervoort D8 GTO Performance	185 R	£120,000	5/2480	375/5500	350/1750	695kg	548	2.8	-	168	-	-	+ There's nothing else like it - Pricey for a car with a five-cylinder engine	★★★★★
Ferrari California T	212 D	£154,460	8/3855	552/7500	557/4750	1729kg	324	3.6	-	196	250	26.9	+ Turbocharged engine is a triumph - Still places daily usability above outright thrills	★★★★★
Ferrari California	171 D	'08-'14	8/4297	483/7750	372/5000	1735kg	283	3.8	-	193	299	-	+ Revised with sharper performance and dynamics - We'd still take a 458 Spider	★★★★★
Honda S2000	118 D	'99-'09	4/1997	237/8300	153/7500	1260kg	191	6.2	-	150	-	28.2	+ An alternative and rev-happy roadster - The Boxster's better	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Convertible	186 R	£56,745	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1587kg	214	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	+ Beautiful, enjoyable, responsive - Noticeably junior to the V6 S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type S Convertible	183 R	£65,745	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1604kg	238	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	+ Better-damped and more rounded than the V8 S - A Boxster S is £20k cheaper	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type R Convertible	092,295	£85,000	5/4200	542/6500	501/3500	1665kg	331	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	+ Pace, characterful V8 - Costs £25k more than the S	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type Project 7	212 R	£135,000	8/5000	567/6500	501/2500	1585kg	363	3.9	-	186	-	-	+ Noise, performance, adjustability - Expensive, and not the GT3 rival we would have liked	★★★★★
Jaguar F-type V8 S Convertible	183 R	'13-'14	8/5000	488/6500	461/2500	1665kg	298	4.3	-	186	259	25.5	+ Wilder than the V6 S - Could be too exuberant for some	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR Convertible	130 R	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1725kg	296	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	+ Fantastic 5-litre V8 - Loses sporting ground to its main foes	★★★★★
Jaguar XKR-S Convertible	167 R	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6500	502/2500	1725kg	319	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	+ Loud and mad; most exciting Jag in years - It was also the most expensive in years	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow GT	183 D	£95,880	4/1984	281/6400	310/3200	875kg	326	4.1	-	144	189	34.0	+ Extraordinary ability, now in a more road-friendly package - Price	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow R	165 R	£87,480	4/1984	296/5500	295/3300	818kg	368	3.6	-	144	-	-	+ Sharper handling, more power - Pity it's not even lighter, and cheaper	★★★★★
KTM X-Bow	138 R	'08-'12	4/1984	237/5500	229/2000	818kg	294	3.8	-	137	-	-	+ Mad looks; real quality feel - Heavier and pricier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 1.6	144 D	£30,900	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	876kg	155	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ New 1.6 Elise is light and fantastic - Smaller engine could put some off	★★★★★

PAST master

Toyota's third-gen MR2 was supposedly inspired by the Boxster. Here's what we said at its launch

Toyota MR2 Issue 015, January 2000

'Mister Two, the new generation, has arrived shrunk-in-the-wash, small and funky. And super-light, weighing in at 975kg, which is nearly 100kg less than its rivals.

'On the move, it's alert, refined and holds together as a forward-looking sports car ought to. The 138bhp 1.8 has the punch to take the MR2 from 0 to 60mph in 7.6sec and on to

130mph. Outright performance is not necessarily the name of the game here, though. It's the open-to-the-elements bit, the singing engine behind your head, the impressively solid body, brilliant brakes and general sophistication.

'Should the MX-5s, MGs and Barchettas of this world be worried? Absolutely.'



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Sports Cars / Convertibles

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating	
Lotus Elise 1.6 Club Racer	183 R	£30,900	4/1598	134/6800	118/4400	852kg	160	6.0	-	127	149	45.0	+ Even lighter, even more focused - A touch pricey for a stripped-out Elise	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S	172 R	£37,200	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	924kg	239	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ New supercharged Elise boasts epic grip and pace - £37k before (pricey) options...	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Club Racer	189 D	£37,200	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	905kg	244	4.2	-	145	175	37.5	+ Purist approach intensifies ability - Lightest, option-free spec requires commitment	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S Cup	207 D	£43,500	4/1798	217/6800	184/4600	932kg	237	4.2	-	140	175	37.5	+ Rewards precision like no other Elise - You can't remove the roof	★★★★★
Lotus Exige S Roadster	186 R	£55,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1166kg	301	3.8	-	145	235	28.0	+ Like the hard-top Elise S, but more road-friendly - Boxster S is a better all-rounder	★★★★★
Lotus Elise R	068 R	'04-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	860kg	223	5.6	13.9	150	196	34.4	+ Most thrillsome Elise yet - Blaring engine note	★★★★★
Lotus Elise SC	131 R	'08-'11	4/1794	218/8000	156/5000	870kg	254	4.5	11.4	148	199	33.2	+ All the usual Elise magic - Supercharged engine lacks sparkle	★★★★★
Lotus Elise S 1.8	104 R	'06-'10	4/1794	134/6200	127/4200	860kg	158	6.3	18.7	127	-	37.2	+ Brilliant entry-level Elise - Precious little	★★★★★
Lotus Elise 111S	049 R	'02-'04	4/1796	156/7000	129/4650	860kg	197	5.1	-	131	-	40.9	+ A genuinely useable Elise - Air-con? In an Elise?	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 135	040 D	'03	4/1796	135/6200	129/4850	726kg	189	5.4	-	129	-	-	+ One of our fave S2 Elises - Brakes need more bite and pedal feel	★★★★★
Lotus Elise Sport 190	044 R	'03	4/1796	190/7800	128/5000	710kg	272	4.7	12.1	135	-	-	+ Fabulous trackday tool - Pricey	★★★★★
Lotus Elise (SI)	126 R	'96-'01	4/1796	118/5500	122/3000	731kg	164	6.1	18.5	126	-	39.4	+ A modern classic - A tad impractical?	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven Supercharged	123 R	'07-'11	4/1796	252/8000	199/7000	670kg	382	3.8	-	150	-	-	+ Impressive on road and track - Not hardcore enough for some	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	138 R	'09-'11	4/1796	266/8200	179/7200	670kg	403	3.7	-	155	-	-	+ evo Track Car of the Year 2009 - It's a 76-grand Lotus with no roof	★★★★★
Lotus 2-Eleven	126 R	'07-'11	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	720kg	267	4.3	-	140	-	-	+ Not far off supercharged car's pace - Pricey once it's made road-legal	★★★★★
Lotus 340R	126 R	'00	4/1796	190/7800	146/5000	658kg	293	4.5	12.5	126	-	-	+ Hardcore road-racer... ..that looks like a dune buggy from Mars	★★★★★
Lotus Elan SE	095 R	'89-'95	4/1588	165/6600	148/4200	1022kg	164	6.7	-	137	-	21.0	+ Awesome front-drive chassis - Rather uninvolving	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio	142 D	£98,940	8/4691	434/7000	332/4750	1980kg	223	5.2	-	177	337	19.5	+ As good to drive as it is to look at - Lacks the grunt of some rivals	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio Sport	161 D	£104,535	8/4691	444/7000	376/4750	1980kg	228	5.0	-	177	377	19.5	+ Looks, performance, cruising ability - Brakes could be sharper	★★★★★
Maserati GranCabrio MC	185 D	£112,370	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1973kg	234	4.9	-	179	337	19.5	+ Most powerful GranCabrio yet - The GranCabrio is starting to show its age	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport (Mk4)	212 R	£22,695	4/1998	158/6000	147/4600	1047kg	153	7.3	-	133	161	40.9	+ Lightest MX-5 since the Mk1 - Lacks intensity	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 2.0i Sport Tech (Mk3.5)	212 R	'09-'15	4/1999	158/7000	139/5000	1098kg	146	7.6	-	138	181	36.2	+ Handles brilliantly again; folding hard-top also available - Less than macho image	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk3)	091 R	'05-'09	4/1798	124/6500	123/4500	1080kg	108	9.3	-	122	-	-	+ Gearchange, interior - Lost some of the charm of old MX-5s; dubious handling	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.8i (Mk2)	017 R	'98-'05	4/1839	146/7000	124/5000	1065kg	140	8.6	-	123	-	32.5	+ Affordable ragtops don't get much better - Cheap cabin	★★★★★
Mazda MX-5 1.6 (Mk1)	131 R	'89-'97	4/1597	115/6500	100/5500	971kg	120	9.0	-	114	-	-	+ The original and still (pretty much) the best - Less than rigid	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 350 Sport	161 R	£44,605	6/3498	302/6500	273/3500	1465kg	209	5.5	-	155	167	39.8	+ Best non-AMG SLK yet - Still no Boxster-beater	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG	186 R	£55,345	8/5461	416/6800	398/4500	1615kg	262	4.6	-	155	195	33.6	+ Quicker and more economical than ever - Needs to be sharper, too	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG	087 R	'05-'10	8/5439	355/5750	376/4000	1575kg	229	4.9	-	155	-	23.5	+ Superb engine, responsive chassis - No manual option, ESP spoils fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SLK 55 AMG Black Series	110 R	'07-'08	8/5439	394/5750	383/3750	1495kg	268	4.9	11.2	174	-	-	+ AMG gets serious - Dull-witted TG-Tronic auto box, uneven dynamics	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL500	169 D	£81,915	8/4663	429/5250	516/1800	1710kg	255	4.6	-	155	212	31.0	+ Wafty performance, beautifully engineered - Lacks ultimate sports car feel	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	171 D	£112,570	8/5461	530/5500	590/2000	1770kg	304	4.3	-	155	231	-	+ Monster performance, lighter than before - Still heavy, steering lacks consistency	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	183 D	£170,815	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	1875kg	336	4.0	-	155	270	24.4	+ Chassis just about deals with the power - Speed limits	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	117 D	'08-'13	8/6208	518/6800	464/5200	1970kg	278	4.6	-	155	328	20.0	+ More focused than old SL55 AMG - Lost some of its all-round appeal	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL55 AMG	070 R	'02-'07	8/5439	493/6100	516/2650	1955kg	256	4.6	10.2	155	-	-	+ As fast as a Murciélago - Not as much fun	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG	071 D	'04-'10	12/5980	604/4800	737/2000	2035kg	302	4.1	-	155	-	-	+ Gob-smacking performance - Gob-smacking pricey	★★★★★
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG Roadster	167 R	'12-'14	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1660kg	345	3.7	-	197	308	21.4	+ Loses none of the coupe's talents - But (understandably) loses the gullwing doors	★★★★★
Morgan 3 Wheeler	198 R	£25,950	2/1976	82/5250	103/3250	525kg	159	6.0	-	115	215	30.3	+ Quirky, characterful, brilliant - Can become a two-wheeler if you push too hard	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8 Speedster	202 R	£71,140	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1000kg	368	4.2	-	148	282	23.3	+ Fantastic old-school roadster experience - Gets unsettled by big bumps	★★★★★
Morgan Plus 8	171 R	£86,345	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1100kg	334	4.4	-	155	256	25.7	+ Hilarious mix of old looks and new mechanics - Refinement is definitely old-school	★★★★★
Morgan Aero SuperSports	145 R	£128,045	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.2	-	170	-	-	+ As above, with a V8 and targa top - It's proper supercar money	★★★★★
Morgan Aero 8	105 R	'02-'08	8/4799	362/6300	361/3400	1100kg	334	4.5	-	170	-	25.2	+ Glorious sound, view over bonnet, dynamics - Awkward-looking rear	★★★★★
Nissan 370Z Roadster	143 R	'10-'14	6/3696	326/7000	269/5200	1554kg	213	5.5	-	155	262	25.2	+ The Zed's old-school character remains intact - Its purposeful looks don't	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (981)	172 R	£38,810	6/2706	261/6700	206/4500	1310kg	202	5.4	-	164	192	34.5	+ Goes and looks better; cleanest Boxster ever - Steering now electric to help cut CO2	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (981)	186 R	£47,035	6/3436	311/6700	265/4500	1320kg	239	5.1	-	173	206	32.1	+ Boxster steps out of 911's shadow - But gets 911's less appealing electric steering	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster GTS (981)	203 D	£52,879	6/3436	325/6700	273/4500	1345kg	246	5.0	-	174	211	31.4	+ Superb dynamics, fantastic engine, great looks - Sport suspension is very firm	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (981)	213 D	£60,459	6/3800	370/6700	310/4750	1315kg	286	4.5	-	180	230	28.5	+ The fastest, most rewarding Boxster yet - Feedback trails the Cayman GT4's	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (987)	'05-'12	6/2893	252/6400	214/4400	1335kg	192	5.9	-	163	221	30.0	-	+ Second-gen Boxster's as brilliant as ever - It's a typically Porsche redesign	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (987)	161 R	'05-'12	6/3436	306/6400	265/5500	1355kg	229	5.3	-	170	223	29.7	+ As above, but with more power - Lighter steering than before	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	188 R	'10-'12	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1275kg	252	5.0	-	166	221	29.1	+ Lighter, more driver-centric Boxster - Collapsed-brolly roof not the most practical	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster (986 2.7)	049 R	'99-'04	6/2687	228/6300	192/4700	1275kg	182	6.3	-	155	-	29.1	+ Still an impeccable sports car - Very little	★★★★★
Porsche Boxster S (986)	070 R	'99-'04	6/3179	260/6200	228/4700	1320kg	200	5.5	-	164	-	26.9	+ Added power is seductive - As above	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera Cabriolet (991)	183 R	£82,169	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1470kg	238	5.0	-	177	216	30.7	+ Brilliant engine - Doesn't quite have the 'magic at any speed' character of previous 911s	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Carrera S Cabriolet (991)	171 R	£92,204	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1485kg	270	4.7	-	187	228	29.1	+ All-new open 911 drives just like the coupe - Which means the same artificial steering	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabriolet (997)	139 D	'07-'12	6/3800	493/6000	479/1950	1645kg	305	3.8	-	194	275	24.1	+ Absurdly quick and capable drop-top - We'd still take the coupe	★★★★★
Porsche 911 Turbo Cabriolet (996)	060 R	'03-'05	6/3596	414/6000	413/4600	1700kg	250	4.7	-	185	-	-	+ Faster than you'll ever need it to be - Just the image thing again	★★★★★
Radical SR3 SL	174 R	£81,300	4/2000	300/6000	265/4000	795kg	383	3.0	-	161	-	-	+ Our 2011 Track Car of the Year, and it's road-legal - You'll need to wrap up warm	★★★★★
Radical RXC Turbo 500	209 D	£143,400	6/3496	530/6100	481/5000	1100kg	490	2.6	-	185	-	-	+ Huge performance, intuitive adjustability, track ability - Compromised for road use	★★★★★
Renault Sport Spider	183 R	'96-'99	4/1998	148/6000	136/4500	930kg	157	6.5	-	131	-	-	+ Rarity, fabulous unassisted steering feel - Heavier than you'd hope	★★★★★
Toyota MR2	187 R	'00-'06	4/1794	138/6400	125/4400	975kg	141	7.2	21.2	130	-	38.2	+ Tight lines, taut dynamics - Minimal luggage space	★★★★★
TVR Tamora	070 R	'01-'07	6/3605	350/7200	290/5500	1050kg	338	4.5	-	160	-	-	+ Well-sorted soft-top TVR - Awkward styling	★★★★★
TVR Tuscan Convertible	091 R	'05-'07	6/3996	365/6800	315/6000	1100kg	337	3.8	8.1	195+	-	-	+ Spirit of the Griff reborn - Over 195mph? Really?	★★★★★
TVR Chimaera 5.0	007 R	'93-'03	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.6	-	167	-	26.4	+ Gorgeous noise, tarmac-ripping grunt - Details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 4.3	068 R	'92-'93	8/4280	280/5500	305/4000	1060kg	268	4.8	11.2	148	-	-	+ The car that made TVR. Cult status - Mere details	★★★★★
TVR Griffith 500	009 R	'93-'01	8/4988	320/5500	320/3750	1060kg	307	4.8	11.2	167	-	22.1	+ Gruff diamond - A few rough edges	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220	023 R	'00-'04	4/2198	145/5800	150/4000	875kg	168	5.6	-	136	-	34.4	+ Absurdly good Vauxhall - The badge?	★★★★★
Vauxhall VX220 Turbo	066 R	'03-'05	4/1998	197/5500	184/1950	930kg	215	4.7	-	151	-	-	+ Nothing comes close for the money - Marginal everyday usability	★★★★★
Zenos E10 S	214 R	£30,595	4/1999	250/7000	295/2500	725kg	350	4.2	-	145	-	-	+ Neutral and exploitable - Prescriptive balance	★★★★★



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Our Choice

Porsche 911 GT3 RS. With Porsche's Motorsport department seemingly infallible at present, an evolution of the 991-generation GT3 could only be something really, really special. And it is. A shoo-in for the eCoty trophy in 2015, then? Don't be too sure – we're lining up some very strong competition for it.



Best of the Rest

Mercedes' AMG GT S (left) is deeply satisfying on every level – we prefer it to the Porsche 911 Turbo and Nissan GT-R. Meanwhile, Aston's V8 Vantage N430 and V12 Vantage S are incredibly entertaining, the Cayman GT4 is as good as the hype suggests, and Jaguar's F-type R Coupe is a hoot.

Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	evo rating
Alfa Romeo 4C	209 R	£51,500	4/1742	237/6000	258/2200	895kg	269	4.5	-	160	157	41.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Carbonfibre tub, mini-supercar looks - Hot hatch engine, clunky gearbox
Alfa Romeo 8C Competizione	120 R	'07-'09	8/4691	450/7000	354/4750	1585kg	288	4.1	-	181	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks, exclusivity, noise, balance - They're all sold
Alpina D4 Biturbo	206 R	£50,950	6/2993	345/4000	516/1500	1585kg	221	4.6	-	173	139	53.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Fifth-gear oversteer - Sounds like a diesel; fuel economy not as good as you might hope
Alpina B4 Biturbo	206 R	£58,950	6/2979	404/5500	442/3000	1615kg	254	4.2	-	188	177	37.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + More fluid than the M4; better traction, too - Not as precise as the M-car over the limit
Alpina B3 Biturbo (E92)	108 R	'07-'13	6/2979	355/5500	369/3800	1570kg	230	4.8	-	177	-	29.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Alpina's M3 alternative - Too refined for some
Alpina B3 GT3 (E92)	176 D	'12-'13	6/2979	402/6000	398/4500	1535kg	266	4.4	-	186	224	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Alpina's M3 GT3 alternative - Auto gearbox frustrates when pressing on
Aston Martin V8 Vantage	169 D	£84,995	8/4735	420/7000	346/5750	1630kg	262	4.7	-	180	328	20.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + 2012 upgrades keep the V8 Vantage on song - Starting to feel a little dated, though
Aston Martin V8 Vantage N430	210 R	£89,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	321	20.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Malleable, involving, can still hold its own - Never feels rampantly quick
Aston Martin V8 Vantage S	168 R	£94,995	8/4735	430/7300	361/5000	1610kg	271	4.5	-	189	299	21.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Keener engine, V12 Vantage looks - Slightly sluggish auto only
Aston Martin V12 Vantage S	190 R	£138,000	12/5935	565/6750	451/5750	1665kg	345	3.7	-	205	343	19.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Amongst the best Astons ever made - Old-school automated 'box
Aston Martin Vantage GT12	214 R	£250,000	12/5935	592/7000	461/5500	1565kg	384	3.5	-	185	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The GT3-style Vantage we've been waiting for - Only 100 being made
Aston Martin V12 Zagato	146 R	'09-'13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.4	9.7	190	388	17.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The car we hoped the V8 Vantage would be - Erm, a tad thirsty?
Aston Martin DB9	181 F	'13	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1680kg	308	4.2	-	190	388	17.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The looks, the noise, the way it drives - It's several times the price of a V12 Vantage
Aston Martin DB9 GT	178 R	£133,495	12/5935	510/6500	451/5500	1785kg	290	4.6	-	183	368	18.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Better than the old DB9 in every respect - Automatic gearbox could be quicker
Aston Martin DBS	214 D	£140,000	12/5935	540/6750	451/5500	1785kg	307	4.5	-	183	333	19.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + More power; still has bags of character - Needs eight-speed auto 'box
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk3)	142 R	'07-'12	12/5935	510/6500	420/5750	1695kg	306	4.2	-	191	388	17.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Stupendous engine, gearbox, brakes - Pricey. Can bite the unwary
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	204 R	£29,915	4/1984	227/4500	273/1650	1230kg	188	6.0	-	155	137	47.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Desirable, grippy and effortlessly quick - Still not the last word in interaction
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI quattro (Mk3)	203 D	£32,860	4/1984	227/4500	273/1600	1335kg	173	5.3	-	155	149	44.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks, interior, decent performance and handling - Lacks ultimate involvement
Audi TT S (Mk3)	209 R	£38,790	4/1984	306/5800	280/1800	1365kg	228	4.9	-	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The most dynamically interesting TT yet - Still not as interactive as a Cayman
Audi TT 2.0 TFSI (Mk2)	155 R	'06-'14	4/1984	208/4300	258/1600	1295kg	163	6.3	15.7	152	154	42.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Front-driver loses nothing to quattro TTs - Steers like a computer game
Audi TT S (Mk2)	193 R	'08-'14	4/1984	268/6000	258/2500	1395kg	195	5.4	-	155	184	35.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Usefully quicker TT; great drivetrain - Still steers like a computer game
Audi TT RS (Mk2)	158 R	'09-'14	5/2480	335/5400	332/1600	1450kg	235	4.4	11.1	155	209	31.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Sublime 5-cylinder turbo engine - Rest of package can't quite match it
Audi TT RS Plus (Mk2)	185 D	'12-'14	5/2480	355/5500	334/1650	1450kg	249	4.3	-	174	209	31.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Stonkingly fast cross-country - Shockingly expensive for a TT
Audi TT Sport (Mk1)	081 D	'05-'06	4/1781	237/5700	236/2300	1390kg	173	5.9	-	155	-	30.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Deliciously purposeful interior, crisp chassis - Numb steering
Audi S5	189 D	£43,665	6/2995	328/5500	325/2900	1675kg	199	4.9	-	155	190	34.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Supercharged V6 makes S5 cleaner and faster - Poor body control
Audi RS5	206 R	£59,870	8/4163	444/8250	317/4000	1715kg	263	4.5	-	155	246	26.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Brilliant engine and improved chassis - Lack of suspension travel; inconsistent steering
Audi R8 V8	201 R	'07-'15	8/4163	424/7900	317/4500	1560kg	276	4.1	9.9	188	332	19.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A true 911 alternative - Exclusivity comes at a price
Bentley Continental GT V8	178 R	£140,300	8/3993	500/6000	487/1700	2220kg	229	4.6	-	188	246	27.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A proper drivers' Bentley with decent economy - W12 suddenly seems pointless
Bentley Continental GT V8 S	204 F	£149,800	8/3993	521/6000	502/1700	2220kg	238	4.3	-	192	250	26.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + An even better drivers' Bentley - Vast weight makes its presence felt in harder driving
Bentley Continental GT	152 D	£150,500	12/5998	567/6000	516/1700	2245kg	257	4.3	-	197	338	19.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + 200mph in utter comfort - Weight, thirst
Bentley Continental GT Speed	212 D	£168,300	12/5998	626/6000	605/1700	2245kg	283	4.0	-	206	338	19.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Desirable meets exclusivity and performance - We'd still have the V8
Bentley Continental GT3-R	203 D	£237,500	8/3993	572/6000	518/1700	2120kg	274	3.6	-	170	295	22.2	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The best-handling Continental ever - Expensive; it still weighs 2120kg
BMW 1-series M Coupe	188 R	'11-'12	6/2979	335/5900	369/1500	1495kg	228	4.8	-	155	224	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Character, turbo pace and great looks - Came and went too quick
BMW M235i Coupe	209 R	£34,535	6/2979	321/5800	332/1300	1455kg	224	5.0	-	155	189	34.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Powertrain, chassis, looks, size - Limited-slip diff is an option, not standard
BMW 435i M Sport Coupe	189 D	£42,365	6/2979	302/5800	295/1200	1510kg	203	5.4	-	155	169	35.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Better balance than 3-series saloon - Can feel characterless at lower speeds
BMW M4	206 R	£57,050	6/2979	425/5500	406/1850	1497kg	288	4.3	-	155	204	32.1	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Ferociously fast - A handful on less-than-perfect or less-than-bone-dry roads
BMW M3 (E92)	196 R	'07-'13	8/3999	414/8300	295/3900	1580kg	266	4.3	10.3	155	290	22.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Fends off all of its rivals - ...except the cheaper 1-series M
BMW M3 GT3S (E92)	171 R	'10-'11	8/4361	444/8300	324/3750	1530kg	295	4.3	-	193	295	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Highly exclusive, one of the most focused M-cars ever - Good luck trying to find one
BMW M3 (E46)	066 R	'00-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	12.3	155	-	23.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + One of the best BMWs ever - Slightly artificial steering feel
BMW M3 CS (E46)	088 R	'05-'07	6/3246	338/7900	269/5000	1495kg	230	5.1	-	155	-	23.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + CSL dynamics without CSL price - Looks like the standard car
BMW M3 CSL (E46)	200 R	'03-'04	6/3246	355/7900	273/4900	1385kg	260	5.3	12.0	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Still superb - Changes from the automated single-clutch 'box are... a... bit... sluggish
BMW M3 (E36)	148 R	'93-'98	6/3201	321/7400	258/3250	1460kg	223	5.4	12.8	157	-	25.7	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Performance, image - Never quite as good as the original
BMW M3 (E30)	165 R	'86-'90	4/2302	212/6750	170/4600	1165kg	185	6.7	17.8	147	-	20.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Best M-car ever! Race-car dynamics for the road - LHD only
BMW Z4 M Coupe	097 R	'06-'09	6/3246	338/7900	269/4900	1420kg	242	5.0	-	155	-	23.3	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A real drivers' car - You've got to be prepared to get stuck in
BMW M Coupe	005 R	'98-'03	6/3246	325/7400	258/3250	1375kg	240	5.1	-	155	-	25.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Quick and characterful - Lacks finesse
BMW 640d	165 D	£62,295	6/2993	309/4400	465/1500	1790kg	175	5.5	-	155	144	51.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Great engine and economy, excellent build - Numb steering, unsettled B-road ride
BMW M6 (Mk2)	211 D	£92,350	8/4395	552/6000	501/1500	1850kg	303	4.2	-	155	232	28.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Mighty ability, pace, technology - You'll want the Competition Package upgrade too...
BMW M6 (Mk1)	106 R	'05-'10	10/4999	500/7750	384/6100	1635kg	311	4.8	10.0	155	342	19.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Awesome GT, awesome sports car - SMG gearbox now off the pace
BMW i8	210 R	£99,590	3/1499	357/5800	420/3700	1485kg	244	4.4	-	155	49	134.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Brilliantly executed concept; sci-fi looks - Safe dynamic set-up
Chevrolet Camaro Z/28*	205 R	£72,000	8/7008	505/6100	481/4800	1732kg	296	4.2	-	175	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Scalpel-sharp engine; great chassis (really) - Might be too stiff for UK roads
Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Z51 (C7)	197 R	£69,810	8/6162	460/6000	465/4600	1539kg	304	4.4	9.4	180	279	23.5	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Performance, chassis balance, supple ride - Body control could be better
Chevrolet Corvette Z06 (C7)*	206 R	£80,000	8/6156	650/6400	650/3600	1598kg	413	3.2	-	186	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Mind-boggling raw speed; surprisingly sophisticated - Edgy when really pushed
Ford Mustang V50 V8 GT	211 D	£33,995	8/4951	415/6500	391/4250	1720kg	245	4.8	-	155	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks, noise, performance, value, right-hand drive - Image not for everyone
Ford Shelby GT500*	178 R	'12-'15	8/5812	662/6500	631/4000	1747kg	385	3.5	-	202	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Huge performance for the money - Putting it to use takes nerve
Ginetta G40R	165 R	£35,940	4/1999	175/6700	140/5000	795kg	224	5.8	-	140	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + A race-compliant sports car for the road - Feels too soft to be a hardcore track toy
Honda Integra Type R (DC2)	200 R	'96-'00	4/1797	187/8000	131/7300	1101kg	173	6.2	17.9	145	-	28.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Arguably the greatest front-drive car ever - Too raw for some
Honda NSX	188 R	'90-'05	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1410kg	196	5.5	-	168	-	22.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The useable supercar - 270bhp sounds a bit weedy today
Honda NSX-R*	051 R	'02-'03	6/3179	276/7300	224/5300	1270kg	221	4.4	-	168	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + evo Car of the Year 2002 - Honda never brought it to the UK
Hyundai Veloster Turbo	176 D	'11-'15	4/1591	184/5500	195/1500	1313kg	142	8.2	-	133	157	40.9	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The usual Hyundai value, with added fun - Styling might be too quirky for some
Jaguar F-type Coupe	204 D	£51,260	6/2995	335/6500	332/3500	1567kg	217	5.5	-	161	234	28.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Drop-dead looks, brilliant chassis, desirability - Engine lacks top-end fight
Jaguar F-type S Coupe	211 D	£60,260	6/2995	375/6500	339/3500	1584kg	241	5.3	-	171	234	28.8	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Exquisite style, more rewarding (and affordable) than roadster - Scrappy on the limit
Jaguar F-type R Coupe	203 R	£85,010	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1650kg	334	4.0	-	186	255	26.4	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Looks, presence, performance, soundtrack - Bumpy and boistrous
Jaguar F-type R Coupe AWD	214 R	£91,660	8/5000	542/6500	501/3500	1730kg	318	4.1	-	186	269	25.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Better in the wet - Less involving in the dry
Jaguar XKR	168 R	'09-'14	8/5000	503/6000	461/2500	1678kg	305	4.6	-	155	292	23.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Fast and incredibly rewarding Jag - The kids will have to stay at home
Jaguar XKR-S	168 R	'11-'14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1678kg	328	4.2	-	186	292	23.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Faster and wilder than regular XKR - The F-type R Coupe
Jaguar XKR-S GT	193 R	'14	8/5000	542/6000	502/2500	1638kg	336	3.9	-	186	292	23.0	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + The most exciting XKR ever - Very limited numbers
Lexus RC F	206 R	£59,995	8/4969	470/6400	391/4800	1765kg	271	4.5	-	168	-	-	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ + Great steering, noise, sense of occasion - Too heavy to be truly exciting

POCKET buying guide

Mini Cooper S & JCW

Years 2006-2014 **Engine** In-line 4-cyl, 1598cc, turbo **Power** 173bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 192lb ft @ 1700-4500rpm
0-62mph 7.1sec **Top speed** 140mph
(spec is for pre-2010 Cooper S)



WHY WOULD YOU?

Because they're fast, darty and fun, with adjustable handling and precise, well-weighted controls. The Cooper S had 173bhp originally, rising to 181bhp in 2010, the JCW has 208bhp.

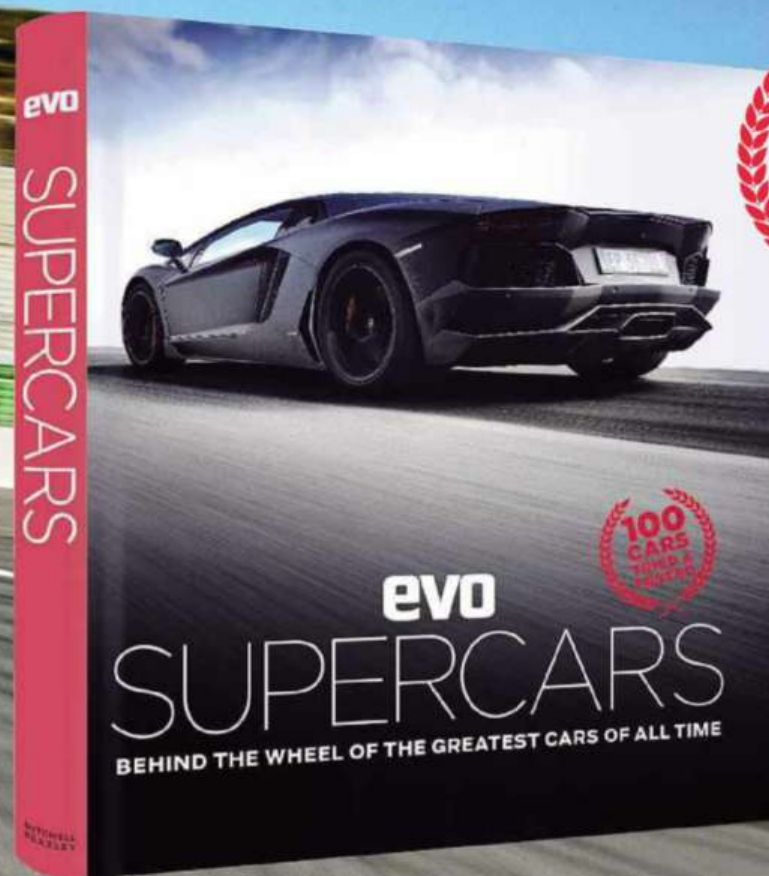
WHAT TO PAY

Cooper Ss start at £5.5k, JCWs at £10k. Add a thousand or two to those figures to get a wider choice of lower-mileage cars.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

The 'death rattle' on cold start-ups. The engine is ordinarily 'tappy', but this is *much* louder – you won't miss it. It's the sound of the timing chain thrashing around. A new chain, tensioner and guides is the full cure – budget at least £500. Lumpy running and missing power could mean carboned-up inlet valves. Walnut-shell blasting fixes it, and costs £250+. (Full guide, *evo* 210.)

evo SUPERCARS The Book



Available 3 September 2015

MITCHELL
BEAZLEY

Coupes / GTs

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	Ec mpg	evo rating
Lotus Exige S (V6)	209 R	£54,500	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1176kg	298	3.8	-	170	235	-	+ Breathtaking road-racer; our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Gearshift not the sweetest
Lotus Exige S (S2)	105 R	'06-'11	4/1796	218/7800	158/5500	930kg	238	4.5	-	148	199	33.2	+ Lightweight with a hefty punch - Uninspiring soundtrack
Lotus Exige (S2)	068 R	'04-'08	4/1796	189/7800	133/6800	875kg	219	4.9	-	147	-	32.1	+ Highly focused road and track tool - Lacks visual impact of S1
Lotus Exige (S1)	200 R	'00-'01	4/1796	192/7800	146/5000	780kg	247	4.6	-	136	-	-	+ Looks and goes like Elise racer - A tad lacking in refinement
Lotus Evora	138 R	£52,500	6/3456	276/6400	258/4700	1382kg	203	5.6	13.6	162	217	30.3	+ Sublime ride and handling, Our 2009 car of the year - Pricey options
Lotus Evora S	168 R	£63,950	6/3456	345/7000	295/4500	1430kg	245	4.6	-	172	229	28.7	+ A faster and better Evora - But one which spars with the Porsche 911...
Lotus Evora 400	213 D	£72,000	6/3456	400/7000	302/3500	1395kg	291	4.1	-	186	225	29.1	+ Evora excitement levels take a leap - Gearbox still not perfect; punchy pricing
Maserati GranTurismo	114 R	£82,890	8/4244	399/7100	339/4750	1880kg	216	5.5	12.7	177	330	19.8	+ Striking, accomplished GT - Doesn't spike the pulse like an Aston or 911
Maserati GranTurismo Sport	188 R	£91,420	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1880kg	245	4.8	-	185	331	19.7	+ The best everyday GranTurismo yet - Starting to get long in the tooth
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	193 R	£110,740	8/4691	454/7000	383/4750	1800kg	256	4.5	-	188	360	18.2	+ Brilliant blend of road racer and GT - Gearbox takes a little getting used to
Maserati Coupe	064 R	'03-'07	8/4244	390/7000	333/4500	1680kg	237	4.8	-	177	-	17.6	+ Glorious engine, improved chassis - Overly sharp steering
Maserati GranSport	073 R	'04-'07	8/4244	400/7000	333/4500	1680kg	239	4.8	-	180	-	-	+ Maser Coupe realises its full potential - Very little
Mazda RX-8	122 R	'03-'11	2R/1308	228/8200	156/5500	1429kg	162	6.5	16.4	146	299	24.6	+ Never mind the quirks, it's a great drive - Wafer-thin torque output
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	162 R	'11-'14	8/6208	451/6800	442/5000	1655kg	277	4.4	10.3	186	280	23.5	+ A proper two-door M3 rival - C63 saloon looks better
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Black Series	171 R	'12-'13	8/6208	510/6800	457/5200	1635kg	317	4.2	-	186	286	-	+ The C63 turned up to 11 - Too heavy, not as fiery as Black Series cars of old
Mercedes-Benz CLK 63 AMG	092 D	'06-'09	8/6208	481/6800	464/5000	1755kg	278	4.6	-	155	-	19.9	+ Power, control, build quality - Lacks ultimate involvement
Mercedes-Benz CLK 63 AMG Black Series	106 R	'07-'09	8/6208	500/6800	464/5250	1760kg	289	4.2	-	186	-	-	+ AMG goes Porsche-hunting - Dull-witted gearshift spoils the party
Mercedes-AMG S63 Coupe	205 D	£125,995	8/5461	571/5500	664/2250	1995kg	294	4.2	-	155	237	28.0	+ Thunderously fast S-class built for drivers - Lacks badge appeal of a Continental GT
Mercedes-AMG S65 Coupe	209 D	£183,075	12/5980	621/4800	737/2300	2110kg	299	4.1	-	186	279	23.7	+ Almighty power, fabulous luxury - Nearly £60k more than the S63!
Mercedes-AMG GT S	213 F	£110,495	8/3982	503/6250	479/1750	1570kg	326	3.8	-	193	219	30.1	+ Gorgeous to look at, fantastic chassis, huge grip - Downshifts could be quicker
Morgan AeroMax	120 R	'08-'09	8/4799	362/6300	370/3600	1180kg	312	4.1	-	170	-	-	+ Weird and utterly wonderful - Only 100 were made
Nissan 370Z	204 R	£27,445	6/3696	323/7000	268/5200	1496kg	219	5.3	-	155	248	26.7	+ Quicker, leaner, keener than 350Z - Not quite a Cayman-killer
Nissan 370Z Nismo	209 R	£37,585	6/3696	339/7400	274/5200	1496kg	230	5.2	-	155	248	26.6	+ Sharper looks, improved ride, extra thrills - Engine lacks sparkle
Nissan 350Z	107 R	'03-'09	6/3498	309/6800	264/4800	1532kg	205	5.5	13.0	155	-	24.1	+ Huge fun, and great value too - Honestly, we're struggling
Nissan GT-R (2012MY/2013MY/2014MY)	210 R	£78,020	6/3799	542/6400	466/3200	1740kg	316	3.2	7.5	196	275	24.0	+ GT-R is quicker and better than ever - But costs over £20k more than its launch price
Nissan GT-R Nismo	199 R	£125,000	6/3799	592/6800	481/3200	1720kg	350	2.6	-	196	275	24.0	+ Manages to make regular GT-R feel imprecise - Compromised by super-firm suspension
Nissan GT-R (2010MY)	152 R	'10-'12	6/3799	523/6400	451/3200	1740kg	305	3.0	-	194	279	23.5	+ More powerful version of the original - But they're not worlds apart to drive
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	125 R	'08-'10	6/3799	473/6400	434/3200	1740kg	276	3.8	-	193	-	-	+ Our 2008 Car of the Year, now from just £35k - You won't see 20mpg often
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R34)	196R	'99-'02	6/2568	276/7000	289/4400	1560kg	180	4.7	12.5	165	-	20.1	+ Big, brutal, and great fun - Needs more than the standard 276bhp
Nissan Skyline GT-R (R33)	196 R	'97-'99	6/2568	276/6800	271/4400	1540kg	182	5.4	14.3	155	-	22.0	+ Proof that Japanese hi-tech can work (superbly) - Limited supply
Noble M12 GT0-3R	200 R	'03-'06	6/2968	352/6200	350/3500	1080kg	332	3.8	-	170	-	-	+ The ability to humble exotica - Notchy gearchange can spoil the flow
Peugeot RCZ 1.6 THP 200	155 R	£27,150	4/1598	197/5500	202/1700	1421kg	141	7.3	18.1	147	155	42.1	+ Distinctive looks, highly capable handling - Could be a bit more exciting
Peugeot RCZ R	209 R	£32,250	4/1598	266/6000	243/1900	1280kg	211	5.9	-	155	145	44.8	+ Rewarding and highly effective when fully lit - Dated cabin, steering lacks feel
Porsche Cayman (981)	209 R	£39,694	6/2706	271/7400	214/4500	1330kg	207	5.7	-	165	195	33.6	+ Very enticing for the money in basic spec - You might still want the power of the 'S'
Porsche Cayman S (981)	202 R	£48,783	6/3436	321/7400	273/4500	1320kg	247	4.5	10.5	175	206	32.1	+ The Cayman comes of age - Erm...
Porsche Cayman GTS (981)	203 R	£55,397	6/3436	335/7400	280/4750	1345kg	253	4.9	-	177	211	31.4	+ Tweaks improve an already sublime package - Slightly 'aftermarket' looks
Porsche Cayman GT4 (981)	214 R	£64,451	6/3800	380/7400	310/4750	1340kg	288	4.4	-	183	238	27.4	+ The Cayman we've been waiting for - Waiting lists
Porsche Cayman (987)	131 R	'11-'13	6/2893	261/7200	221/4400	1330kg	199	5.8	-	165	221	30.1	+ Extra power, just as involving - Still lacks the desirability of other Porsches
Porsche Cayman S (987)	132 R	'06-'13	6/3436	316/7200	273/4750	1350kg	237	5.2	-	172	223	29.7	+ Still want that 911? - Yeah, us too
Porsche Cayman R (987)	158 R	'11-'13	6/3436	325/7400	273/4750	1295kg	255	4.7	-	175	228	29.1	+ Total handling excellence - Styling additions not to all tastes
Porsche 911 Carrera (991)	199 R	£73,509	6/3436	345/7400	288/5600	1400kg	250	4.8	-	179	211	31.4	+ 911 becomes cleaner and cleverer - But some of its character's gone AWOL
Porsche 911 Carrera S (991)	201 R	£83,545	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1415kg	283	4.3	9.5	188	223	29.7	+ As above, but with supercar pace - Electric steering robs it of some tactility
Porsche 911 Carrera 4S (991)	179 R	£88,400	6/3800	394/7400	324/5600	1465kg	273	4.5	-	185	233	28.5	+ More satisfying than RWD 991 Carreras - Choose your spec carefully
Porsche 911 Carrera GTS (991)	204 R	£91,098	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1425kg	302	4.4	-	190	223	29.7	+ The best RWD 991 Carrera - Optional active anti-roll bars rob feedback
Porsche 911 Carrera 4 GTS (991)	208 D	£95,862	6/3800	424/7500	324/5750	1470kg	293	4.4	-	189	233	28.5	+ The highlight of the 991 Carrera line-up - Pricey for a Carrera
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.2)	121 R	'08-'11	6/3800	380/6500	310/4400	1425kg	271	4.7	-	188	242	27.4	+ Poise, precision, blinding pace - Feels a bit clinical
Porsche 911 Carrera S (997.1)	070 R	'04-'08	6/3824	350/6600	295/4600	1420kg	246	4.6	10.9	182	-	24.5	+ evo Car of the Year 2004; like a junior GT3 - Tech overload?
Porsche 911 Carrera (996 3.4)	008 R	'98-'01	6/3387	296/6800	258/4600	1320kg	228	5.2	-	174	-	28.0	+ evo Car of the Year 1998; beautifully polished - Some like a bit of rough
Porsche 911 GT3 (991)	206 R	£100,540	6/3799	468/8250	324/6250	1430kg	333	3.5	-	196	289	23.0	+ evo Car of the Year 2013 - At its best at licence-troubling speeds
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (991)	213 R	£131,296	6/3996	493/8250	339/6250	1420kg	353	3.3	-	193	296	22.2	+ Sensationally good to drive - They won't all be painted Ultra Violet
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.2)	182 R	'09-'11	6/3797	429/7600	317/6250	1395kg	312	4.2	9.2	194	303	22.1	+ Even better than the car it replaced - Give us a minute...
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (3.8, 997.2)	200 R	'10-'11	6/3797	444/7900	317/6750	1370kg	329	4.0	-	193	314	-	+ Our favourite car from the first 200 issues of evo - For people like us, nothing
Porsche 911 GT3 RS 4.0 (997.2)	187 R	'11-'12	6/3996	493/8250	339/5750	1360kg	368	3.8	-	193	326	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2011 - Unforgiving on-road ride; crazy used prices
Porsche 911 GT3 (997.1)	182 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1395kg	298	4.3	9.4	192	-	-	+ Runner-up evo Car of the Year 2006 - Ferrari 599 GTBs
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (997.1)	105 R	'07-'09	6/3600	409/7600	298/5500	1375kg	302	4.2	-	193	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2007 - A chunk more money than the brilliant GT3
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.2)	082 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1380kg	272	4.3	9.2	190	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2003 - Chassis is a bit too track-focused for some roads
Porsche 911 GT3 RS (996.2)	068 R	'03-'05	6/3600	375/7400	284/5000	1330kg	286	4.2	9.2	190	-	-	+ Track-biased version of above - Limited supply
Porsche 911 GT3 (996.1)	182 R	'99	6/3600	360/7200	273/5000	1350kg	271	4.5	10.3	187	-	21.9	+ evo Car of the Year 1999 - Porsche didn't build enough
Rolls-Royce Wraith	205 D	£229,128	12/6592	624/5600	590/1500	2360kg	260	4.6	-	155	327	20.2	+ Refinement, chassis, drivetrain - Shared componentry lets cabin down
Subaru BRZ	204 R	£22,495	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1230kg	163	7.6	-	140	181	36.2	+ Fine chassis, great steering - Weak engine, not the slide-happy car they promised
Toyota GT86	174 R	£22,995	4/1998	197/7000	151/6400	1275kg	157	7.6	-	140	181	36.2	+ More fun than its cousin (above) - Same lack of torque, poor interior quality
TVR Sagaris	097 R	'05-'07	6/3996	406/7500	349/5000	1078kg	383	3.7	-	185	-	-	+ Looks outrageous - 406bhp feels a touch optimistic
TVR Tuscan S (Mk2)	076 R	'05-'07	6/3996	400/7000	315/5250	1100kg	369	4.0	-	185	-	-	+ Possibly TVR's best ever car - Aerodynamic 'enhancements'
TVR Cerbera Speed Six	004 R	'98-'04	6/3996	350/6800	330/5000	1130kg	315	5.0	11.4	160+	-	-	+ Accomplished and desirable - Check chassis for corrosion
VW Scirocco GT 2.0 TSI	155 R	£26,125	4/1984	217/4500	258/1500	1369kg	158	6.5	-	153	139	47.1	+ Golf GTI price and performance - Interior lacks flair
VW Scirocco R	200 D	£32,580	4/1984	276/6000	258/2500	1426kg	187	5.7	-	155	187	35.3	+ Great engine, grown-up dynamics - Perhaps a little too grown-up for some

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Our Choice

Ferrari 458 Speciale. The regular 458 Italia was amazing enough, but the Speciale follows in the tradition of the 360 Challenge Stradale and 430 Scuderia and makes the car it is based on even more, well, special. Our 2014 Car of the Year. It's equally brilliant in open-top 'Speciale A' form, too.



Best of the Rest

Porsche's 918 Spyder (left) pips the McLaren P1 on the road, and vice versa on track. The LaFerrari is an incredible drive, too. Maybe get all three.... Meanwhile, Paganì's Huayra was our joint 2012 Car of the Year and Lamborghini's Aventador offers true supercar drama, especially in SV form.

Supercars

Car	Issue no.	Price	Engine cyl/cc	bhp/rpm	lb ft/rpm	Weight	bhp/ton	0-60mph	0-100mph	Max mph	CO2 g/km	EC mpg	EVO rating
Aston Martin Vanquish (Mk2)	203 R	£192,995	12/5935	568/6650	465/5500	1739kg	332	3.6	-	201	298	22.1	+ Much better than the DBS it succeeds, especially in 2015MY form - It's no Ferrari F12
Aston Martin Vanquish S (Mk1)	110 R	'05-'07	12/5935	520/7000	425/5800	1875kg	282	4.9	10.1	200	-	-	+ Vanquish joins supercar greats - A tad intimidating at the limit
Aston Martin One-77	179 R	'10-'12	12/7312	750/6000	553/7600	1740kg	438	3.7	-	220+	-	-	+ The engine, the looks, the drama - Gearbox hates manoeuvring; only 77 were made
Audi R8 V10 Plus	213 D	£134,500	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1555kg	393	3.2	-	205	287	23.0	+ Timeless drivetrain, huge performance - Needs to be driven hard to really engage
Audi R8 V10	181 D	'10-'15	10/5204	518/8000	391/6500	1620kg	325	3.9	8.4	194	346	19.0	+ Real supercar feel - The V8 is cheaper, and still superb
Audi R8 V10 Plus	190 R	'13-'15	10/5204	542/8000	398/6500	1570kg	351	3.8	-	198	346	19.0	+ An R8 fit to take on the 458 and 12C - Firm ride may be too much for some
Audi R8 GT	169 F	'10-'12	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1520kg	369	3.6	-	199	-	-	+ Everything we love about the R8 - Not as hardcore as we wanted
Audi R8 LMX	208 R	'15	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1595kg	358	3.4	-	198	299	21.9	+ More of everything that makes the R8 great - S-tronic transmission not perfect
Bugatti Veyron 16.4	134 R	'05-'11	16/7993	1000/6000	922/2200	1950kg	521	2.8	5.8	253	596	11.4	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - Er, lacks luggage space?
Bugatti Veyron Super Sport	151 R	'10-'14	16/7993	1183/6400	1106/3000	1838kg	654	2.5	-	268	539	12.2	+ The world's fastest supercar - Limited to 258mph for us mere mortals
Bugatti EB110	078 R	'91-'95	12/3500	552/8000	451/3750	1566kg	358	3.4	-	212	-	-	+ Superbly engineered 4WD quad-turbo rocket - It just fizzled out
Caparo T1	138 R	£301,975	8/3499	575/10,500	310/9000	689kg	848	3.8	6.2	205	-	-	+ Absolutely staggering performance - Absolutely staggering price tag
Chevrolet Corvette ZR1	133 R	'09-'13	8/6162	638/6500	603/3800	1528kg	424	3.8	7.6	205	355	18.8	+ Huge pace and character - Take plenty of brave pills if there's rain
Ferrari 488 GTB	211 R	£183,964	8/3902	661/8000	560/3000	1475kg	455	3.0	-	205+	260	24.8	+ Staggeringly capable - Lacks a little of the 458's heart and excitement
Ferrari 458 Italia	183 R	'09-'15	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1485kg	384	3.2	6.8	202	307	20.6	+ An astounding achievement - Paddleshift only
Ferrari 458 Spider	185 R	£199,006	8/4497	562/9000	398/6000	1530kg	373	3.3	-	198	275	23.9	+ A 458 that sounds and feels more organic - Er, 4mph slower than the Italia?
Ferrari 458 Speciale	203 R	£208,100	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1395kg	435	3.0	-	202+	275	23.9	+ evo Car of the Year 2014 - If you don't own a regular 458, nothing
Ferrari 458 Speciale A	204 D	£228,682	8/4497	597/9000	398/6000	1445kg	420	3.0	-	199	275	21.2	+ Same dynamics as the coupe but less shouty - Some chassis flex on bumpy surfaces
Ferrari F430	163 R	'04-'10	8/4308	483/8500	343/5250	1449kg	339	4.0	-	196	-	18.6	+ Just brilliant - Didn't you read the plus point?
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	121 R	'07-'10	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1350kg	378	3.5	7.7	198	-	15.7	+ Successful F1 technology transplant - Likes to shout about it
Ferrari Scuderia Spider 16M	133 D	'09	8/4308	503/8500	347/5250	1440kg	355	3.7	-	196	360	18.0	+ A hardcore soft-top Ferrari - Earplugs recommended
Ferrari 360 Modena	163 R	'99-'04	8/3586	394/8500	275/4750	1390kg	288	4.5	9.0	183	-	17.0	+ Worthy successor to 355 - Not quite as involving as it should be
Ferrari 360 Challenge Stradale	068 R	'03-'04	8/3586	420/8500	275/4750	1280kg	333	4.1	-	186	-	-	+ Totally exhilarating road-racer. It's loud - It's very, very loud
Ferrari F355 F1 Berlinetta	163 R	'97-'99	8/3496	374/8250	268/6000	1350kg	281	4.7	-	183	-	16.7	+ Looks terrific, sounds even better - Are you kidding?
Ferrari F12 Berlinetta	190 R	£241,053	12/6262	730/8250	509/6000	1630kg	455	3.1	-	211	350	18.8	+ 730bhp isn't too much power for the road - Super-quick steering is an acquired taste
Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano	101 R	'06-'12	12/5999	611/7600	448/5600	1688kg	368	3.5	7.4	205	415	15.8	+ evo Car of the Year 2006 - Banks are getting harder to rob
Ferrari 599 GTO	161 R	'11-'12	12/5999	661/8250	457/6500	1605kg	418	3.4	-	208	-	-	+ One of the truly great Ferraris - Erm, the air con isn't very good
Ferrari 575M Fiorano Handling Pack	200 R	'02-'06	12/5748	508/7250	434/5250	1730kg	298	4.2	9.6	202	-	12.3	+ Fiorano pack makes 575 truly great - It should have been standard
Ferrari 550 Maranello	169 R	'97-'02	12/5474	485/7000	415/5000	1716kg	287	4.3	10.0	199	-	12.3	+ Everything - Nothing
Ferrari FF	194 R	£238,697	12/6262	651/8000	504/6000	1880kg	347	3.7	-	208	360	15.4	+ Four seats and 4WD, but a proper Ferrari - Looks divide opinion
Ferrari 612 Scaglietti F1	090 R	'04-'11	12/5748	533/7250	434/5250	1840kg	294	4.3	9.8	199	470	13.8	+ Awesomely capable grand tourer - See above
Ferrari LaFerrari	203 R	c£1m	12/6262	950/9000	664/6750	1255kg	769	3.0	-	217+	330	-	+ Perhaps the greatest Ferrari ever - Brakes lack a touch of precision on track
Ferrari Enzo	203 R	'02-'04	12/5999	651/7800	485/5500	1365kg	485	3.5	6.7	217+	545	-	+ Intoxicating, exploitable - Cabin detailing falls short of a Zonda or F1's
Ferrari F50	186 R	'96-'97	12/4699	513/8500	347/6500	1230kg	424	3.9	-	202	-	-	+ A better drivers' Ferrari than the 288, F40 or Enzo - Not better looking, though
Ferrari F40	199 R	'87-'92	8/2936	471/7000	426/4000	1100kg	437	4.1	-	201	-	-	+ Brutally fast - It's in the dictionary under 'turbo lag'
Ford GT	200 R	'04-'06	8/5409	550/6500	500/3750	1583kg	353	3.7	-	205	-	-	+ Our 2005 Car of the Year - Don't scalp yourself getting in
Hennessey Venom GT	180 R	£900,000	8/7000	1244/6500	1155/4000	1244kg	1016	2.5	-	270	-	-	+ 0-200mph in 14.5sec, and it handles too - Looks like an Exige
Jaguar XJ220	157 R	'92-'94	6/3498	542/7200	475/4500	1470kg	375	3.7	-	213	-	-	+ Britain's greatest supercar... - ...until McLaren built the F1
Koenigsegg Agera R	180 R	c£1.09m	8/5032	1124/7100	885/2700	1435kg	796	2.8	-	273	-	-	+ As fast and exciting as your body can handle - It's Veyron money
Koenigsegg One:1	202 R	c£2.0m	8/5065	1341/7500	1011/6000	1360kg	1002	2.9	-	273	-	-	+ The most powerful car we've ever tested - It's sold out; we couldn't afford one anyway...
Koenigsegg CCRX Edition	118 R	'08-'10	8/4800	1004/7000	796/5600	1280kg	797	2.8	-	250+	-	-	+ One of the world's fastest cars - Spike power delivery
Lamborghini Huracán LP610-4	209 D	£186,760	10/5204	602/8250	413/6500	1532kg	399	3.2	-	202+	290	22.6	+ Defines the numbers; incredible point-to-point pace - Takes work to find its sweet-spot
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	180 D	'08-'13	10/5204	552/8000	398/6500	1410kg	398	3.7	-	202	325	16.0	+ Still a missile from A to B - Starting to show its age
Lamborghini LP570-4 Superleggera	152 R	'10-'13	10/5204	562/8000	398/6500	1340kg	426	3.5	-	202	325	20.6	+ Less weight and more power than original Superleggera - LP560-4 runs it very close
Lamborghini Gallardo	094 R	'06-'08	10/4961	513/8000	376/4250	1520kg	343	4.3	9.4	196	-	-	+ On a full-bore start it spins all four wheels. Cool - Slightly clunky e-gear
Lamborghini Gallardo Superleggera	104 R	'07-'08	10/4961	522/8000	376/4250	1420kg	373	3.8	-	196	-	-	+ Lighter, more agile - Grabby carbon brakes, clunky e-gear
Lamborghini Aventador LP700-4	194 R	£260,040	12/6498	690/8250	509/5500	1575kg	445	2.9	-	217	370	17.7	+ Most important new Lambo since the Countach - Erm... expensive?
Lamborghini Aventador LP750-4 SV	214 R	£321,723	12/6498	740/8400	509/5500	1525kg	493	2.8	-	217+	370	17.7	+ More exciting than the standard Aventador - Inconsistent gearbox
Lamborghini Murciélago	089 D	'01-'06	12/6192	570/7500	479/5400	1650kg	351	4.0	-	205	-	-	+ Gorgeous, capable and incredibly friendly - V12 feels stressed
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	093 R	'06-'11	12/6496	631/8000	487/6000	1665kg	385	3.3	-	211	-	21.3	+ Compelling old-school supercar - You'd better be on your toes
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	200 R	'09-'11	12/6496	661/8000	487/6500	1565kg	429	3.2	7.3	212	-	-	+ A supercar in its truest, wildest sense - Be prepared for stares
Lamborghini Diablo 6.0	019 R	'00-'02	12/5992	550/7100	457/5500	1625kg	343	3.8	-	202+	-	-	+ Best-built, best-looking Diablo of all - People's perceptions
Lexus LFA/LFA Nürburgring	200 R	'10-'12	10/4805	552/8700	354/6800	1480kg	379	3.7	-	202	-	-	+ Absurd and compelling supercar - Badge and price don't quite match
Maserati MC12	079 R	'04-'05	12/5998	621/7400	468/5500	1445kg	437	3.8	-	205	-	-	+ Rarer than an Enzo - The Ferrari's better
McLaren 650S	196 R	£195,250	8/3799	641/7250	500/6000	1428kg	456	3.0	-	207	275	24.2	+ Better brakes, balance and looks than 12C; more power too - Costs an extra £19k
McLaren 675LT	213 R	£259,500	8/3799	666/7100	516/5500	1328kg	510	2.9	-	205	275	24.2	+ A proper road-racer that asks questions of the P1 - Aventador price tag
McLaren 12C	187 R	'11-'14	8/3799	616/7500	442/3000	1434kg	435	3.1	-	207	279	24.2	+ Staggering performance, refinement - Engine noise can be grating
McLaren P1	205 R	£866,000	8/3799	903/7500	664/4000	1395kg	658	2.8	-	217	194	34.0	+ Freakish breadth of ability - At its mind-bending best on track
McLaren F1	205 R	'94-'98	12/6064	627/7500	479/4000	1137kg	560	3.2	6.3	240+	-	19.0	+ Still the most single-minded supercar ever - There'll never be another
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	159 R	£165,030	8/6208	563/6800	479/4750	1620kg	335	4.1	8.4	197	308	21.4	+ Great engine and chassis (gutting doors too!) - Slightly tardy gearbox
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG Black Series	204 R	£229,985	8/6208	622/7400	468/5500	1550kg	408	3.6	-	196	321	20.6	+ Stunning engine, superb body control - Be careful on less-than-smooth roads...
Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren	073 R	'04-'07	8/5439	617/6500	575/3250	1693kg	370	3.7	-	208	-	-	+ Zonda-pace, 575-style drivability - Dreadful brake feel
Noble M600	186 R	c£200,000	8/4439	650/6800	604/3800	1198kg	551	3.8	7.7	225	-	-	+ Spiritual successor to the Ferrari F40 - It's a bit pricey
Pagani Huayra	185 R	c£1m	12/5980	720/5800	737/2250	1350kg	542	3.3	-	224	-	-	+ Our joint 2012 Car of the Year - Engine isn't as nape-prickling as the Zonda's
Pagani Zonda 760RS	170 R	£15m	12/7291	750/6300	575/4500	1210kg	630	3.3	-	217+	-	-	+ One of the most extreme Zondas ever - One of the last Zondas ever (probably)
Pagani Zonda S 7.3	096 R	'02-'05	12/7291	555/5900	553/4050	1250kg	451	3.6	-	197	-	-	+ evo Car of the Year 2001 (in earlier 7.0 form) - Values have gone up a fair bit since then
Pagani Zonda F	186 R	'05-'06	12/7291	602/6150	575/4000	1230kg	497	3.6	-	214	-	-	+ Everything an Italian supercar ought to be - Looks a bit blingy next to a Carrera GT
Pagani Zonda Cinque Roadster	1471												

Track Times

Key

+ = new addition this month. **Red** denotes the car is the fastest in its class.

Car	Lap time	Peak mph	issue no.	Conditions
Radical SR8LM (fastest car)	1:13.6	127.8	138	Dry
Caparo T1 (fastest supercar)	1:14.8	130.9	131	Dry
Ferrari 458 Italia	1:19.3	120.0	159	Dry
Gumpert Apollo S	1:19.4	120.4	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C (Corsa tyres)	1:19.6	121.2	159	Dry
Caterham Levante V8	1:19.6	118.6	131	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2 RS	1:19.9	122.3	158	Dry
Lotus 2-Eleven GT4	1:20.1	113.2	138	Dry
Caterham Superlight R500	1:20.2	115.7	119	Dry
McLaren MP4-12C	1:20.6	120.9	159	Dry
Noble M600	1:20.8	121.8	159	Dry
Porsche 997 GT3 RS 4.0 (fastest coupe)	1:21.0	118.2	160	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV	1:21.3	121.1	134	Dry
Ariel Atom 3 Supercharged	1:21.5	113.6	119	Dry
KTM X-Bow (300bhp)	1:21.5	112.7	138	Dry
Ferrari 430 Scuderia	1:21.7	117.2	121	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3 RS (3.8)	1:21.9	116.8	150	Dry
Lamborghini Gallardo LP560-4	1:22.5	119.1	122	Dry
Brooke Double R	1:22.5	113.2	119	Dry
Lamborghini Murciélago LP640	1:22.9	116.7	143	Dry
Porsche Carrera GT	1:23.3	115.2	119	Dry
Porsche 997.2 GT3	1:23.3	114.5	138	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo S	1:23.5	117.5	146	Dry
Porsche 997 GT2	1:23.5	115.1	119	Dry
Nissan GT-R (2008MY)	1:23.6	113.1	119	Dry
Porsche 991 Carrera	1:23.6	112.5	182	Dry
Porsche 991 Carrera Cabriolet	1:23.9	112.3	183	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SL63 AMG	1:23.9	-	YouTube	Dry
Porsche 997 Turbo	1:24.1	113.5	136	Damp
Lotus 340R (190bhp)	1:24.2	110.0	135	Dry
Porsche Boxster S (981)	1:24.2	109.3	183	Dry
Caterham Superlight R300	1:24.3	101.5	138	Dry
Maserati GranTurismo MC Stradale	1:24.5	115.1	160	Dry
Porsche Cayman S (981)	1:24.5	109.2	202	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG	1:24.6	115.7	146	Dry
Porsche Boxster Spyder (987)	1:24.7	107.7	167	Dry
Caterham 7 Supersport	1:24.8	101.6	YouTube	Dry
Ferrari California	1:25.0	111.8	134	Dry
KTM X-Bow	1:25.0	105.0	123	Dry
BMW E92 M3 Coupe	1:25.1	109.1	162	Dry
Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG Black	1:25.2	108.6	131	Dry
Jaguar F-type V8 S	1:25.2	111.2	183	Dry
Audi RS5	1:25.4	108.8	162	Dry
Audi R8 Spyder V8	1:25.5	107.0	167	Dry
Porsche Cayman R	1:25.5	106.8	158	Dry
Aston Martin V8 Vantage Roadster	1:25.6	109.1	183	Dry
BMW M5 (F10) (fastest saloon)	1:25.7	112.0	165	Dry
Jaguar XKR-S	1:25.7	-	YouTube	Dry
Aston Martin V12 Vantage	1:25.8	110.9	146	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X FQ-400	1:25.9	107.5	138	Dry
BMW 1-series M Coupe	1:25.9	106.4	158	Dry
Mitsubishi Evo X RS 360	1:26.1	106.6	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Trophy (fastest hot hatch)	1:26.1	105.3	166	Dry
Jaguar F-type S Coupe	1:26.2	106.3	202	Dry
Audi TTS	1:26.3	107.2	149	Dry
Aston Martin DBS	1:26.4	109.5	143	Dry
Porsche Panamera Turbo	1:26.5	109.2	137	Dry
Audi RS6 Avant (C7) (fastest estate)	1:26.5	-	YouTube	Dry
BMW M135i	1:26.6	-	YouTube	Dry
Jaguar XJ220	1:26.7	111.7	131	Dry
Porsche Cayenne Turbo S (fastest 4x4)	1:26.8	106.1	YouTube	Dry
Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG	1:26.8	104.9	165	Dry
Porsche Cayenne Turbo	1:26.9	107.4	158	Dry
Mercedes-Benz GLA45 AMG	1:26.9	-	205	Dry
Lotus Evora	1:27.1	104.2	145	Dry
Nissan 370Z	1:27.1	104.0	158	Dry
Jaguar F-type V6 S	1:27.2	105.0	YouTube	Dry
Porsche Panamera S	1:27.3	102.4	165	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 265 Cup	1:27.3	-	YouTube	Dry
Mercedes-Benz C63 AMG Coupe	1:27.7	111.0	162	Dry
Lotus Elise SC	1:27.7	104.6	131	Dry
Audi S3	1:27.7	-	YouTube	Dry
Vauxhall VXR8 Bathurst S	1:27.8	106.1	131	Dry
BMW E46 M3 CSL	1:27.8	105.4	153	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane R26.R	1:27.8	103.3	-	-
Audi RS6 Avant (C6) (fastest estate)	1:27.9	111.0	121	Dry
Jaguar XFR	1:27.9	108.1	137	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra 280	1:28.0	-	YouTube	Dry
Lexus IS-F	1:28.1	106.4	151	Dry
Porsche Boxster S (987)	1:28.1	105.4	120	Dry
Subaru WRX STI	1:28.3	101.6	157	Dry
Porsche Macan S	1:28.3	-	205	Dry
SEAT Leon Cupra R	1:28.7	102.4	162	Dry
Bentley Continental Supersports	1:29.2	105.8	149	Dry
Lotus Elise Club Racer	1:29.2	95.5	162	Dry
Renaultsport Mégane 250 Cup	1:29.9	101.4	156	Dry
Vauxhall VXR8 Clubsport Tourer	1:29.9	-	YouTube	Dry
Honda NSX	1:30.1	101.3	145	Dry

TRACK MAP



- Location Bedford Autodrome
- Length 1.85 miles (2.98 kilometres)
- Direction Anti-clockwise

Note: West Circuit reconfigured in May 2015. The above times are from before this date. Newer times are not comparable.



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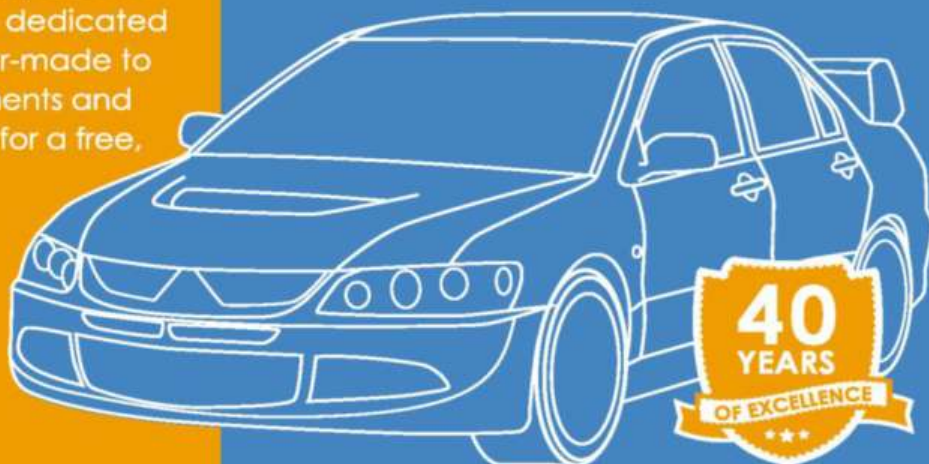
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Art of speed



Aston Martin Vantage V600 twin-supercharged V8

by RICHARD LANE | PHOTOGRAPHY by GUS GREGORY

THEY'LL TELL YOU THE MOST POTENT Aston Martin Vantage is the new GT12. Wrong. The 'V600' Vantage, class of '98, pips the fresher by 8bhp and hammers it for intimidation. The GT12 is not the lesser car – far from it (see *evo* 214). It's just that the old-timer has 600bhp and 600lb ft, no aerodynamic aids to speak of and, on early cars, sod all electronic stability control software should two tons of steel, aluminium and testosterone go loco.

The two don't stand serious comparison, of course. One is a paean to power while the other is more concerned with its effective use. But whichever their preference, petrolheads' faces never fail to scrunch up in approval at the older car's way of doing things.

The V600 project started shortly after Aston's engineers had given us at the time the world's most powerful production car: the 550bhp Vantage 'V550'. Traction would evaporate during 90mph gearchanges in the dry, but still some customers weren't sated. Thus a post-registration option package that side-stepped type approval emerged from the Works Service department, but boy would you need the readies. The conversion cost £43,000 on top of the donor car's £189,950.

Included were six-piston AP brakes said to dissipate enough energy during a 200mph stop to heat a pensioner's flat for a fortnight. Hollow-spoked magnesium alloys were chosen, which meant marketing could unscrupulously deploy the term 'lightweight'. Behind said wheels were Eibach springs and Koni adjustable dampers. The gearbox was from a Corvette ZR1, only with shortened ratios and a blanked-off sixth gear. It wouldn't be missed: fifth gave a theoretical top speed of 221mph...

Out of context, the 5340cc quad-cam V8 could pass for a galactic dreadnought flanked by planet-destroying plasma cannons, but in situ the hand-built reality was appreciably better. About a block prepared by Callaway were two Roots-style superchargers from Eaton, a re-engineered cooling system and an extra intercooler radiator. They helped elevate Tadek Marek's 30-year-old engine design to heights the chassis couldn't really cope with. Nobody cared.

Regalia? Well, not especially. There was a carbonfibre engine cover, which in fairness was a pretty big deal at the time, and some lovely gold badges, and that was it. But even dormant this was an engine that radiated supremacy, espoused the industrial and hummed with a hard beauty. Was there ever a tool better suited to the job? ☒

evo NEXT MONTH

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evo Car of the Year 2015

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